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Niles Scream Park raises $147,000+ for local groups

COMMUNITY REPORT

NILES — The Niles Scream Park, one of Michiana's most popular autumn attractions, recently completed another successful season at its always changing 44-acre site on Mayflower Road between Niles and Buchanan.

This year, the 51st consecutive year for running the project, the Scream Park raised over $147,000 for more than 50 area children's organizations, civic groups and other charities. Proceeds benefited local schools and service organizations including groups such as the Boy Scouts, Haunters Against Hate, Lake Shore High School Stage Crew, Cass County Fair Association and the LaPorte Little Theatre. The funds raised also will be used for six different college scholarships for local high school seniors. Since 1996, the Scream Park has donated more than $2.7 million.

In addition to the cash donations, the Niles Scream Park supported many local causes, auctions and benefits with ticket donations totaling more than $4,900. Additionally, they awarded $5,000 in college scholarships in 2024.

The project included seven haunted attractions and provided volunteer opportunities both in construction and operation of the Scream Park. Plans are underway for even more frightening additions in the coming year. More than 22,000

See PARK, Page A7

SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

2024 Niles Scream Park cast party.

Speedway shooting suspect, armed robbery suspect in court for preliminary hearings

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Publications Contributor

NILES — Preliminary hearings were held Tuesday at the Niles courthouse in two high-profile cases.

Alonzo Dominic Davis, 39, of Niles, was bound over for trial on five felony charges: assault with intent to murder, unarmed robbery, felon in possession of a firearm and two counts of using a firearm in the commission of a felony. His next court dates include a Jan. 22 case conference and a trial March 12-14.

Davis

The incident occurred Nov. 18 outside the Speedway gas station at South 11th and Fort Streets in Niles Township. Davis confronted a former co-worker, Dontae Lavon Murphy, outside the gas station and the two struggled over Murphy's gun. Davis is alleged to have taken the gun and shot at Murphy.

Testifying Tuesday were Murphy and Berrien County Sheriff's Department Detective/Lieutenant Ian Dodd. Murphy testified that Davis came up to his truck and confronted him about Davis losing his job at the place where Murphy also worked and was a supervisor.

Murphy said the two were outside the truck initially and then he went back into his truck when Davis came up again and they wrestled over the gun Murphy had in the pocket of his hoodie. Davis got the gun and fired at Murphy and would have fired again if it hadn't jammed. Murphy went inside the gas station and the police were called.

Dodd said he interviewed both men afterwards and also watched the dash cam videos from both Murphy's and Davis's vehicles. Dodd said Davis told him he would have continued shooting at Murphy if the gun hadn't jammed.

The final preliminary hearing was held for Edward Deontae Turner, 38, of Berrien Springs. He is charged in connection with a string of central county armed robberies from June to November.

Judge Smith bound Turner over for trial on four counts of armed robbery, four counts of possession of a firearm by a prohibited person, four counts of use of a firearm in the commission of a felony and one count of receiving, concealing, possession of a stolen weapon. His bond remains at $250,000 cash or surety.

Turner's next court dates are Jan. 22 for a case conference and for a trial starting March 12.

The incidents occurred between June 25 and Nov. 14. The June 25 armed robbery was at the Dollar General in Oronoko Township, the Sept. 6 incident at the Dollar General in Royalton Township, the Oct. 10 incident at the Dollar General in Benton Township and the Nov. 14 incident at the BP gas station in Oronoko Township.

Seven people testified

See SUSPECT, Page A8

READY TO SHINE

2025 Miss/Mr. Niles Pageant set for Dec. 14

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — The Miss/Mr. Niles court will be selected this week, giving area youth a chance to represent their community and wear a sparkling crown, too.

The annual scholarship pageant will take place at 3 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 14 at Niles High School, 1441 Eagle St. This year's theme is the "Grand Ole Opry: A Centennial Celebration." The Grand Ole Opry is a famous regular live country-music venue in Nashville, Tennessee turning 100 years old in 2025.

Andrew Boyer and Buchanan native Maya Schuhknecht, Miss Michigan 2023, will co-emcee the event. Tickets are $15 presale, or $20 at the

See SHINE, Page A8

SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS CONTRIBUTOR

The contestants for Miss and Mr. Niles in the 2025 Miss/Mr. Niles Scholarship Pageant.

6 54708 09550 1

Annual decorating contest returns to greater Niles area

COMMUNITY REPORT

NILES — To prepare for the jolly old man in red, Mayor Nick Shelton is once again inviting residents of the greater Niles area to participate in the Sights and Lights Decorating Contest by decorating their homes for the holidays.

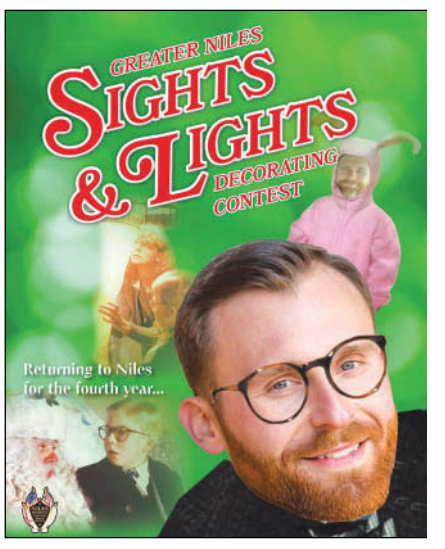
With the help of now City Council member Sheila Koebel and Niles resident Ambrosia Neldon, Shelton created the contest in 2021 as a way to lift spirits amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, dozens of people have participated in the contest.

"This little contest has become such a fun tradition in our community," Shelton said. "Families and neighbors show off their holiday spirit with incredible decorations, local businesses spread generosity by sponsoring awesome prizes, and everyone gets to enjoy the magic of the season. It's a win for everyone — and a reminder of how special our community really is."

Though Shelton only holds jurisdiction over the City of Niles, interest in neighboring townships was so great that he decided to include the entire 49120 zip code.

To participate, entrants take a photo of their home decorated for the holidays or winter and submit it. Then, after the registration period lapses, the Greater Niles area votes on their favorite decorations. The winners receive

See CONTEST, Page A8



OBITUARIES

Quinnan Lorvette Young
John Carpenter
Bruce Jones
Contstance Blackmond
LulaBelle Hartman
Donald Snyder
Laurel Jacob Hamilton

A6

FRANKLY

TIPS, QUIPS, AND BLIPS

"I hate to see Shelton's go. It would be nice if they opened a new store."

A2

Niles falls to Goodrich 35-6 in D4 football championship

B1

FRANKLY

TIPS, QUIPS, AND BLIPS

What is Frankly? It is where readers sound off on issues of the day. Have a tip, quip or blip? Call Frankly at (269) 687-7702 or email rich.cains@leaderpub.com

"Thank you Niles Football team for a fantastic season. You made us so proud."

"We are so proud of our Niles team and coaching staff. You gave us plenty of thrills during the football season."

"I can't believe Michigan players had to be pepper sprayed by the Ohio cops, especially when it was OSU players who started the altercation."

"Go Blue!"

"So much for no pardon of Hunter Biden. Just another lie by our politicians at the top."

"I'm thinking that getting rid of the FBI is probably not a good idea. The FBI provides a lot of resources to local law enforcement, especially ones on a shoestring budget. You know the terrorists love this idea."

"Thank you to the woman who helped me with my groceries at Wal-Mart. I was a few dollars short and you immediately stepped in and helped me. Your kindness really made my day."

"I hate to see Shelton's go. It would be nice if they opened a new store."

"Checks and Balances is imperative to our nation's functionality. If you don't know what it is, look it up. We cannot allow for any branch of government to have total power over the others. This is not what our founders intended."

"Santa has returned to Niles on the St. Joseph river. I look forward to his arrival every year. Thank you to those responsible for this joy you bring to so many young and old."

"Lake effect snow is dangerous. Have boots, blanket, flashlight and charged phone and cord in your car. It could save your life."

"Frankly, we are learning to DIStrust in every area of our lives . Scammers are everywhere! Technology is certainly a mixed bag, wonderful in many ways and TERRIBLE in others."

WEATHER

SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	60% Chance Rain Showers	40% Chance Frozen Mix	Partly Cloudy	30% Chance Frozen Mix
35° 31°	44° 41°	48° 34°	34° 28°	32° 22°	32° 28°

NILES NATIVE, NAVY OFFICER CELEBRATES THANKSGIVING ABOARD USS RONALD REAGAN

U.S. NAVY PHOTO BY MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST 2ND CLASS CALEB DYAL

Culinary Specialist 3rd Class Nicolas Headley, from Niles, Michigan, cuts a cake during a Thanksgiving meal on the mess decks onboard Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76), while in-port Naval Base Kitsap in Bremerton, Washington, Nov. 28, 2024. Ronald Reagan provides a combat-ready force that protects and defends the United States, and supports alliances, partnerships and collective maritime interests in the Indo-Pacific region.

Woman sentenced for tampering with evidence in fatal Eau Claire shooting

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Publications Contributor

NILES — An area resident has pleaded guilty to tampering with evidence and will be sentenced in late January.

Elizabeth Deanne Harper, 43, of Stevensville, had been charged with tampering with evidence and being an accessory after the fact related to the Nov. 2 shooting death of firefighter Chad Medlin in Eau Claire.

Berrien County Assistant Prosecutor Kate Arnold said Harper pleaded guilty Tuesday at the Niles courthouse to the tampering charge in exchange for the accessory after the fact charge being dismissed. The plea agreement does not include Harper testifying against the man charged in the homicide.

Harper

Harper will be sentenced Jan. 27 and faces up to 10 years in prison. She remains in jail in lieu of $25,000 cash or surety bond.

Arnold said Harper told Berrien County Trial Court Judge Jennifer Smith that she picked up Rigoberto Gomez, the suspect in the Nov. 2 homicide, in Millberg and took him back to her mother's home in Coloma Township.

Harper said Gomez didn't tell her what had happened except that there had been an altercation. She said that she looked outside the home the next morning after Gomez had been arrested by Berrien County Sheriff's Deputies and found a black box in the backyard. She then threw it into the woods off of Rocky Gap Road on her way to work.

Gomez faces six felony charges: open murder, assault with intent to do great bodily harm less than murder, assault with a dangerous weapon and three counts of use of a firearm in the commission of a felony. He has yet to appear in court for a pre-exam conference or preliminary hearing.

The incident occurred shortly after midnight on Nov. 2 when Berrien County Sheriff's Deputies were called to downtown Eau Claire on reports of an altercation and a shooting at the intersection of Main and Elm Streets in the village. They found Medlin unresponsive as well as another man who was injured. Medlin later died at the hospital.

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Niles man sentenced for threatening wife with knife

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Publications Contributor

NILES — Three area residents received jail sentences Monday in sentencings in Berrien County Trial Court at the Niles courthouse.

Babbu Singh, 56, of Niles, formerly from Punjab, India, pleaded guilty to domestic violence reduced from assault with a dangerous weapon and was sentenced to one year probation, 15 days in jail and $525 in fines and costs.

Singh

The incident occurred May 19 when he got into an argument with his wife at their Niles home and threatened her with a small knife.

Arnold noted that Singh had a blood alcohol level of .10 at the time of the incident. She said his prior assaultive history includes incidents in 2015 and 2016. "Here, he has had difficulty admitting to what he did," she said. "He told the court earlier that he grabbed his wife because he didn't want her to leave the house."

Defense attorney Robert LaBre said that Singh has a closeknit family and has three children with his wife. They own a number of convenience stores in the area. He pointed out that Singh accidentally hit his wife's face when he was trying to grab her arm and that the weapon involved was a small cheese knife.

He said Singh's previous assaultive crimes included an assault of his neighbor when he used hair spray to keep him away and then an incident involving his sister-in-law. He said Singh is addressing his alcohol issues and has stopped drinking.

Judge Smith said Singh has successfully completed a previous probation and noted that his wife wants to have contact with her husband at some point in the future.

Sylvester Buckingham, Jr., 66, of South Bend, pleaded guilty to possession of narcotics/cocaine and disorderly person-illegal occupation and was sentenced to concurrent jail terms. He was sentenced to 180 days in jail on the drug charge and 90 days in jail on the disorderly charge. He has credit for three days served and must pay $248.

Buckingham

The incident occurred July 1, 2023 in Niles Township.

Defense attorney Robert Reilman said Buckingham suffers from a variety of physical ailments and didn't think additional time in jail would help anything. Buckingham apologized for the incident and said he is starting to recover from his illnesses which include spinal meningitis and congestive heart failure.

Berrien County Trial Court Judge Jennifer Smith noted that Buckingham was arrested in South Bend on another drug charge in October 2023 and had also been on probation previously.

"I don't know what good it will do to put you back on probation," Judge Smith said. "You have a significant prior record including convictions for drugs. You started using drugs at age 50. If you're not going to follow bond conditions and continue to use drugs, probation would be a waste and not appropriate."

"I also don't think that fines and costs only is appropriate," she added. "I'm concerned a little bit about being in jail with your medical issues, but the jail will have to deal with it."

Aaron Apolinar Macedo, 30, of Niles, pleaded guilty to attempted assault with a dangerous weapon and was sentenced to 60 days in jail with credit for two days served and $258 in fines and costs.

The incident occurred Sept. 3 in Niles.

Berrien County Assistant Prosecutor Kate Arnold called Macedo's behavior "concerning". She noted that Macedo had a weapon and pointed it at the victim and threatened to shoot the victim in the head. She also noted that Macedo had been unsuccessful on probation in the past.

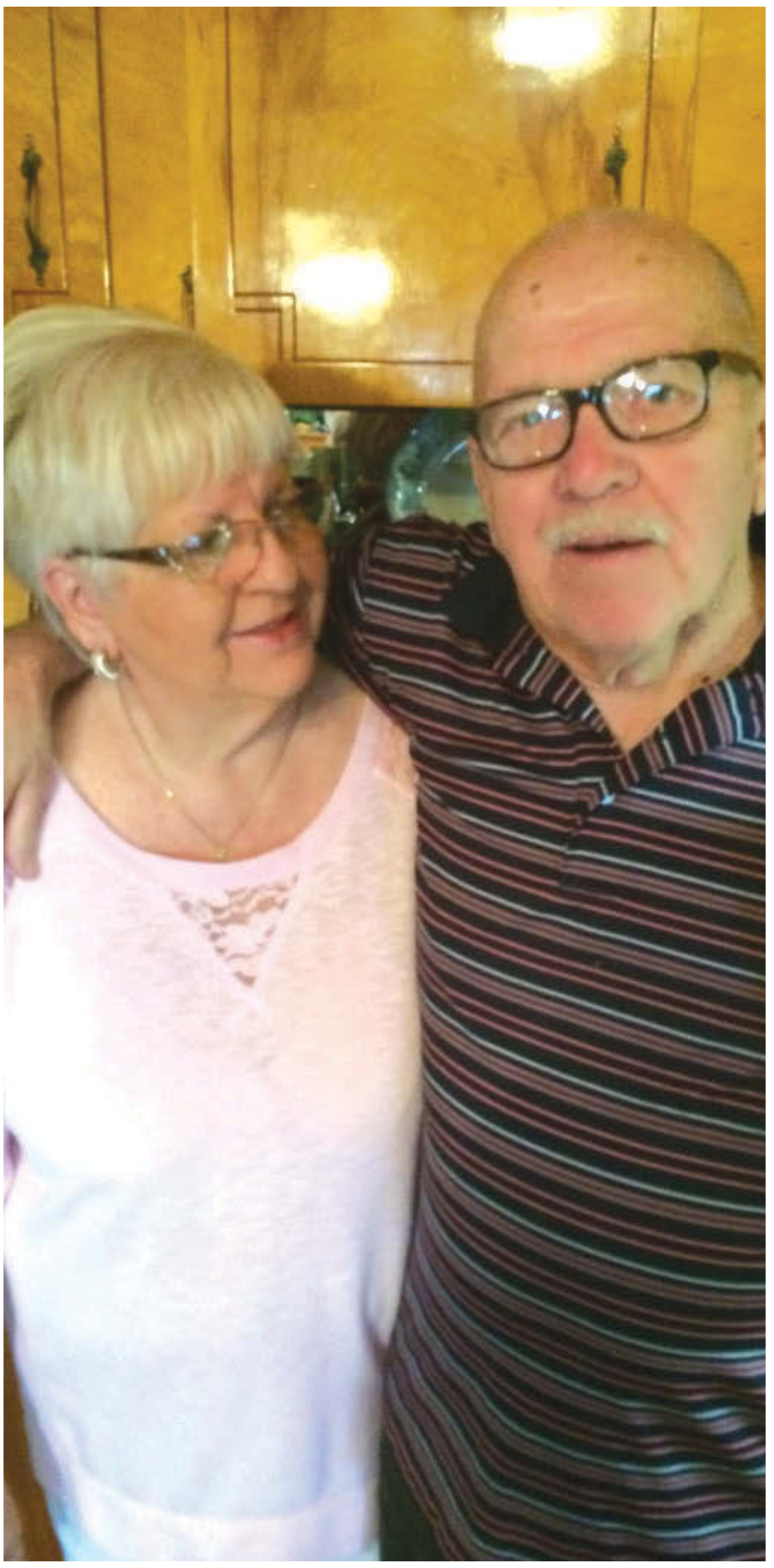
Defense attorney Shayne Williams said Macedo is working full time and has a place to live. She said she thought Macedo could be successful on probation.

Macedo apologized for his actions. "I take full responsibility for my actions, I want to move forward from this,," he said.

"This situation could have been a lot worse," Judge Smith said. "When you introduce a weapon into a situation, a lot of bad things can happen. Your past record includes a lot of domestic violence incidents. I don't know what it will take for you to learn you can't engage in this behavior."

"You've had multiple violations on past probations," she added. "I don't think placing you on probation and hoping for the best is the best option. I hope you will be able to get your job back when you get out but I can't ignore your past behavior."

ANNIVERSARY



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Opinion

Grief doesn't take a holiday

Grief is a subject we all know very well but push it away as a society. We are told to "move on," "I thought you'd be over it by now," or even "People have been through worse." Forgetting to feel your grief, or putting it on the back burner as to get through it can be quite damaging. We gather, carve the turkey or ham, open presents, light the Menorah, feast, listen to music and enjoy the time we have with our loved ones. In the midst of our joy and celebrations, many have silent sadness, a sadness categorized as grief. We get so caught up in the amazing lights, sales, plays at school or finding that perfect tree without a bald spot. However, we often look past or forget about the grief that also comes along with holidays. I have had more than my fair share of grief over the last few years and I find myself trying to push it away, which does nothing but push it to another day. I try to remind myself, as you should too, that feeling your grief is a good thing. It means that you had a love for someone so beautiful. By feeling that grief, their spirit and love continue to remain alive during celebrations. If feeling your grief means you need a good cry, then cry—I know I do. If feeling your grief means you need to talk to someone about how you feel, reach out to a friend, family member, or even your therapist. If feeling your grief means you tell stories about the person or pet you are grieving, then tell those stories while you laugh and cry. Please remember that grief is a good thing because, again, it means you loved someone very much. Therefore, if you have a lonely neighbor or know someone who has lost someone recently (or even years ago), be a patient, loving, and kind listening ear. Reach out to others and show that you are a safe space for their grief this holiday season: bring them cookies, invite them to a movie, or even over to your home for dinner. Be the reason someone does not feel alone this holiday season and spread as much love as you can. I will leave you with this, a quote from actor, Andrew Garfield:

Turnock

"I hope this grief stays with me, because it's all the unexpressed love that I didn't get to tell her, and I told her every day."

Peace and love to you all!

Joshua Turnock is a Niles graduate and a valued member of Leader Publications' Design Team.

NEWS

SMC dean recognized for innovative idea

COMMUNITY REPORT

DOWAGIAC — Southwestern Michigan College Dean of the School of Business and Advanced Technology Dr. Karen Reilly won second place and $5,000 in a recent statewide innovative idea pitch competition.

Reilly was announced as a winner in the inaugural competition by the Michigan College Access Network (MCAN) at its 13th annual conference at Soaring Eagle Casino and Resort in Mount Pleasant.

In the spring, MCAN launched the Take Flight: Sixty by 30 Pitch Competition, receiving more than 50 interest forms from across the state. More than 30 video applications were completed, then the four finalists presented their pitches at the conference.

Sixty by 30 refers to increasing the number of working-age adults with a skill certificate or college degree from 51.1 percent today to 60 percent by 2030.

MCAN encouraged applicants to share their most innovative idea or best practice related to pathways and transitions, college-going culture, credential completion, college affordability and/or adult student attainment.

Reilly pitched The First Five schedule, "a catalyst for college credential completion." This initiative focuses on strategic course enrollment for a full-time student's first college term or part-time student's first year.

Her idea draws on the importance of students passing the first five courses on their first attempt and the benefits of students engaging early in a course in their major.

Her framework proposes a basic math course, a student success course, an introductory course in the major, a general education course and a gen ed or intro course in the major.

"If students take math with student success at the same time, they pass math 85 percent of the time," Reilly said. "Five courses have been shown to be a predictor of how successful college students will be. If a student completes the first five courses successfully, they have a 60-percent chance of graduating."

"It's something I've been thinking about for a long time. This gave me a forum," Riley said. "While it was shared that I was from SMC, I did this independently, as did the other contestants. The initiative has not been implemented at SMC as our current parameters don't fit, but Dr. Joe (Odenwald, president) and (Vice President for the Student Experience Dr.) Katie (Hannah) and I have discussed it. Part of it comes from my Ph.D. dissertation. My research was on a three-credit version of student success paired with a math course. Ours is seven weeks long for one credit."

SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

Dr. Karen Reilly.

> "If students take math with student success at the same time, they pass math 85 percent of the time. Five courses have been shown to be a predictor of how successful college students will be. If a student completes the first five courses successfully, they have a 60-percent chance of graduating."
>
> — **Dr. Karen Reilly**

"It was a good experience," Reilly said, "and a lot more rigorous than I would have thought. They paid for us to come to the conference. We were in rehearsals every day. They wanted a big, entertaining, Shark Tank production. We had a lot of coaching" for their five-minute presentations.

"MCAN was excited to see the traction behind the Take Flight: Sixty by 30 Pitch Competition. This was a great medium to showcase the dedication and creativity of our partners across the state in improving college attainment and completion," said Ryan Fewins-Bliss, MCAN executive director. "Each finalist put great effort over many months into developing these innovative pitches, which will support college attainment and student success across the state."

The pitch session was sponsored by Michigan Virtual, an online learning platform dedicated to advancing K-12 education through digital learning, research, innovation, policy and partnerships.

Michigan Virtual worked collaboratively with MCAN to support and coach each finalist ahead of the conference.

"It was such an honor to be a part of the Take Flight: Sixty by 30 Pitch Competition with MCAN. The four finalists were outstanding; from what we saw a few weeks ago when we started coaching to today, they've made such amazing strides and it's no surprise they had some great pitches," said Scott Watkins, senior director of business strategy at Michigan Virtual. "They're all incredible educators, deeply talented and deeply dedicated. What's most exciting is what's to come – this isn't the end for their ideas, they're going to make a great impact."

"I have had organizations reach out and ask if I would present," Reilly said. "Whatever I can do to enhance student success."

Reilly came full circle joining SMC in the summer of 2020 from Florida's Valencia College as dean of learning support since 2012. Before that she was dean of academic skills advancement at Ivy Tech for eight years.

She holds a Ph.D. from Indiana State University in postsecondary curriculum and instruction; a master of public affairs in public management; and a bachelor of arts in biology.

A Dowagiac native, the former Karen Sarabyn earned her associate degree from SMC.

Niles Daily Star

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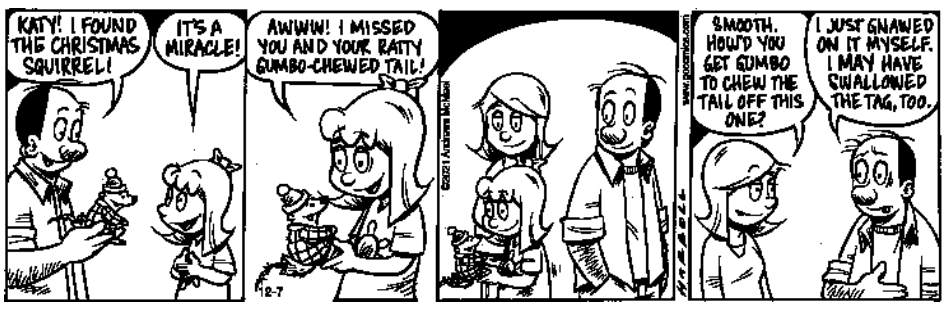
COMICS & PUZZLES

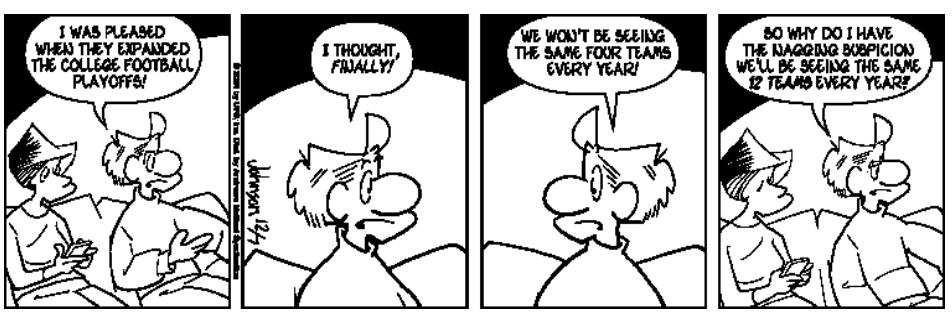
ADAM


KATY! I FOUND THE CHRISTMAS SQUIRREL!
IT'S A MIRACLE!
AWWW! I MISSED YOU AND YOUR RATTY GUMBO-CHEWED TAIL!
SMOOTH. HOW'D YOU GET GUMBO TO CHEW THE TAIL OFF THIS ONE?
I JUST GNAWED ON IT MYSELF. I MAY HAVE SWALLOWED THE TAG, TOO.
12-7

ALLEY OOP

DOC, I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE! I NEED TO CLEAR MY CONSCIENCE!
I KNEW IT! YOU ATE ALL THE CHOCOLATE ICING!
I BORROWED THE TIME CUBES AND TOOK WEIRD MABY TO THE STONE AGE, AND HE STAYED THERE.
ALLEY, THAT IS BEYOND IRRESPONSIBLE. I'M DISAPPOINTED IN YOU.
ALSO, I ATE THE ICING.
YOU'RE DEFINITELY GETTING WRITTEN UP FOR THAT!
12/7

ARLO & JANIS


I WAS PLEASED WHEN THEY EXPANDED THE COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFFS!
I THOUGHT, FINALLY!
WE WON'T BE SEEING THE SAME FOUR TEAMS EVERY YEAR!
SO WHY DO I HAVE THE NAGGING SUSPICION WE'LL BE SEEING THE SAME 12 TEAMS EVERY YEAR?
Johnson 12/4

BIG NATE

DEE DEE, YOU'VE GOT TO BREAK OUT OF THIS FUNK!
I MEAN, I KNOW YOU'RE MISERABLE, BUT—
AH-HA!
NO, I'M NOT MISERABLE! I'VE BEEN MAKING YOU THINK I'M MISERABLE!
IT'S CALLED... ACTING!
SHE'S BACK.
GREAT.
12/7

BORN LOSER

WASH UP FOR DINNER, SON. MOM MADE A QUICHE.
A WHAT?
A QUICHE.
GESUNDHEIT!
YOU'VE BEEN HANGING AROUND WITH HURRICANE HATTIE TOO MUCH!
Art Crapp '24
www.gocomics.com/the-born-loser
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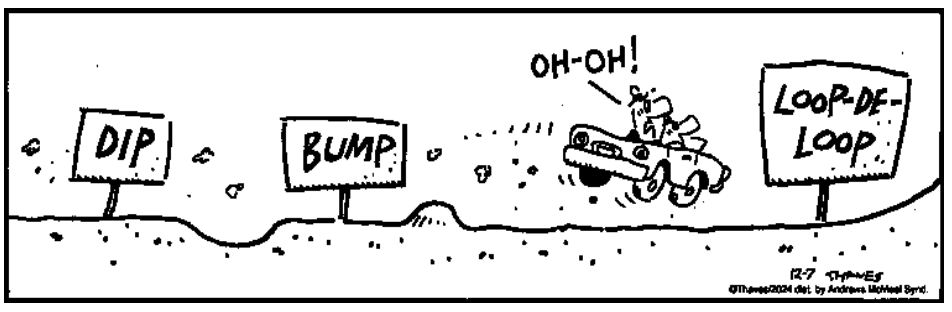
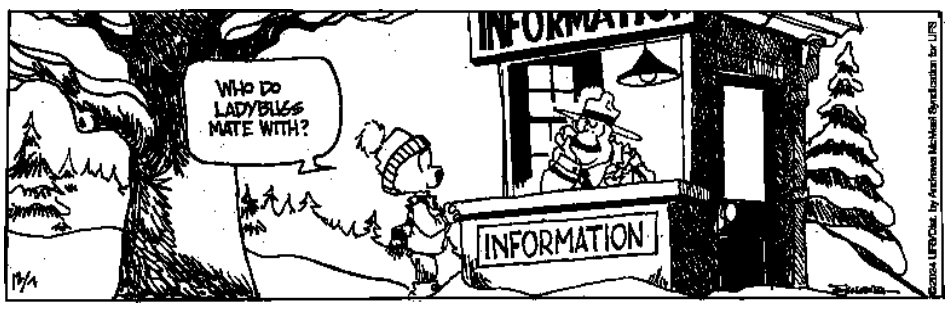
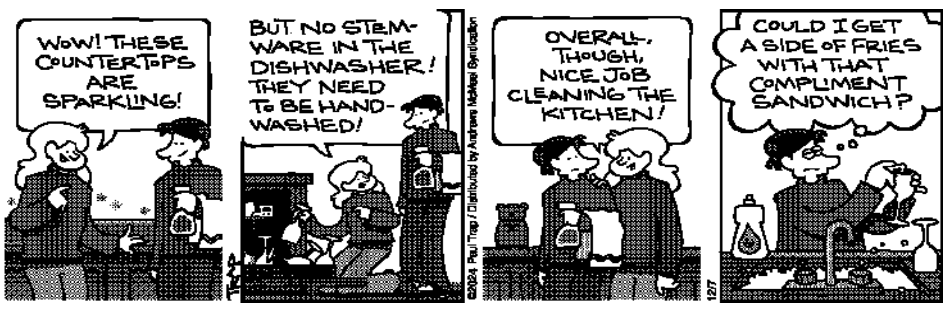
FRANK & ERNEST



GRIZZWELLS



THATABABY


WOW! THESE COUNTERTOPS ARE SPARKLING!
BUT NO STEMWARE IN THE DISHWASHER! THEY NEED TO BE HAND-WASHED!
OVERALL, THOUGH, NICE JOB CLEANING THE KITCHEN!
COULD I GET A SIDE OF FRIES WITH THAT COMPLIMENT SANDWICH?
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12/7

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SODOKU PUZZLE

HOW TO PLAY: Each row, column and set of 3-by-3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 through 9 without repetition.

DIFFICULTY RATING: 5/5

ANSWER ON PAGE 6

	3	2					4	
	5			1		8		
		7		4	5			1
		8		7			2	
			1	2	6			
	6			3		7		
5			3	9		6		
		3		5			7	
	1					2	5	

MODERATELY CONFUSED

ARE WE LOOKING FOR A 'CLARK GRISWOLD' TREE OR A 'CHARLIE BROWN' ONE THIS YEAR?
STAHLER
12/7
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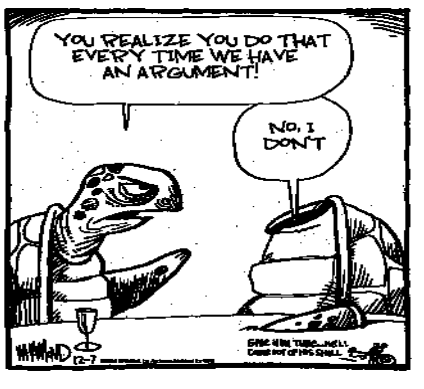
REALITY CHECK

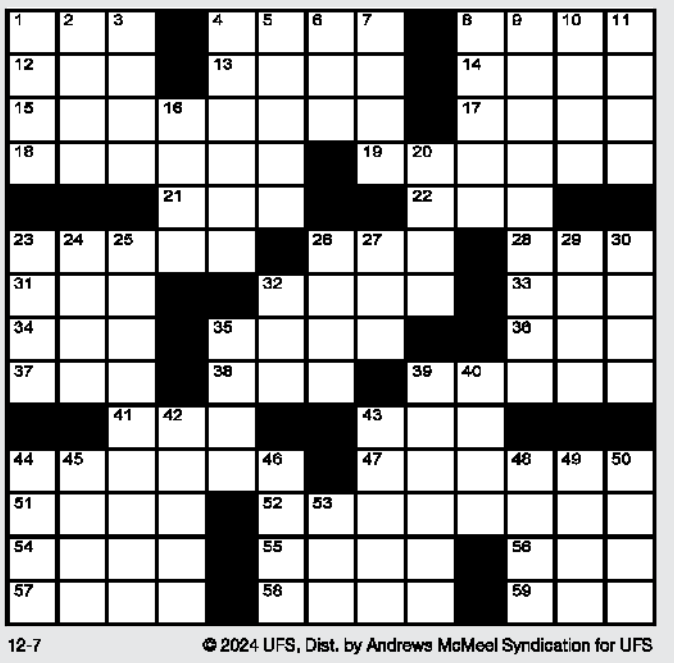


CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS
1 Aid to navigation
4 "Moby-Dick" captain
8 Competent
12 Conceit
13 Horse's hair
14 Boast
15 Encircle
17 Went fast
18 Commence (2 wds.)
19 Fall of rain
21 United
22 Samovar
23 Lawman — Earp
26 Be triumphant
28 Move up and down
31 "— Just Not That Into You"
32 Ernie's Muppet friend
33 Down Under bird
34 "— a girl!"
35 Wood for ships
36 Succor
37 Stalemate
38 Ready the presses
39 Ilks
41 "— About You"
43 Elliott or Rockwell
44 Spider's trap
47 Likely
51 — breve
52 Monopoly property
54 Lascivious look
55 Bullets
56 Top
57 Ore deposit
58 Wedding cake part
59 Test

DOWN
1 Clutter
2 Chills and fever
3 Harbor town
4 Quantity
5 Terre —, IN
6 Actress — Sothern
7 Cots
8 Player
9 Grizzly cousin (2 wds.)
10 Learning
11 Pitcher
16 Plant part
20 Pursuit
23 Jot
24 Abominable snowman
25 Came together
26 Frail
27 Annoy
29 Leave out
30 Unopened flowers
32 London's Big —
35 Neap —
39 Gob
40 Actor — Epps
42 Cognizant
43 Gooey stuff
44 Name
45 Butter alternative
46 Unruly child
48 Fastener
49 Den
50 Circular current
53 French friend

ANSWER ON PAGE 6



12-7

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BREVITY

LET'S GO SOMEWHERE ELSE. THIS LOOKS LIKE A JINGLES BAR.
BARK IF YOU WIN
GOCOMICS.COM/BREVITY 12-7
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HEART OF THE CITY

WHEN WE GOT BACK HOME, WE RENAMED HER RIPLEY. THERESA IS NOT A GOOD DOG NAME.
OH, DEAN, YOU'RE SO SENSITIVE.
SNIFF SNIFF
IT WAS A REALLY HEART-WARMING STORY! I'M HUMAN!
HEART OF THE CITY © 2024 ANN TELNAES
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DEATH NOTICES

Quinnan Lorvette Young, 53, passed away on Friday, November 29, 2024, in Buchanan, Michigan. Arrangements have been entrusted to and are pending with Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

John Carpenter, 83, Niles, passed November 29, 2024. Funeral services were Thursday, December 5, 2024 at Brown Funeral Home in Niles. Arrangements were entrusted to Brown Funeral Home, Niles. www.BrownFuneralHomeNiles.com.

Bruce Jones, 90, of Charlotte, Michigan passed away November 28, 2024 in Lansing, Michigan. Arrangements are pending and have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services, Niles. www.BrownFuneralHomeNiles.com.

OBITUARIES

Contstance Blackmond

June 12, 1930 - November 25, 2024

Constance "Connie" Louise Blackmond, 94 of Niles, died Monday, November 25, 2024 in Woodland Terrace. Connie, was born June 12, 1930 in Sturgis, Michigan to Donald and Margaret Norris. She married Stephen G Blackmond in Sturgis, Michigan 1949.

Connie graduated from Sturgis high school and attended Western Michigan University. She worked for Graphic Art Center Clark Equipment, as an office manager. Connie was a member and a lay minister at Trinity Episcopal Church. At the church, she was also a lay reader, sang in the choir, did vestry and was a member of the altar guild. Connie was president of Junior Arts Club in Dowagiac and the Ladies Reading Club in Niles. She loved the beauty of nurturing her garden. Connie was an excellent cook. To her family, she was known as Honey Grams. She made every holiday special for her family but anytime with them was special to her. She will be greatly missed.

Connie is survived by her children, Frederick (Sherry) Blackmond, Margaret (Jesse) Townsend, Kathryn (Edward) Mamaril; thirteen grandchildren, nineteen great grandchildren; her sister, Ann (Douglas) Van Meter and several nieces and nephews.

Connie was preceded in death by her husband Stephen and her son, Donald.

Services will be held Saturday, December 7, 2024 11a.m. at Trinity Episcopal Church 9 South 4th street, Niles. with gathering one hour prior. Burial will take place at a later date at Riverside Cemetery in Dowagiac.

Memorial contributions may be made to Trinity Episcopal Church.

LulaBelle Hartman

May 25, 1933 - November 29, 2024

LulaBelle Hartman, 91, of Marcellus, died peacefully Friday evening, November 29, 2024.

Her life began May 25, 1933 in Newberg Township, Michigan, the older of two daughters born to Fred and Grace Youngs.

Lu loved her kids, her grandkids, her great grandkids, and her great great grandkids.

Lula will be greatly missed by family and friends. She is survived by two daughters, Julie Hartman, Diana Fritz; four grandchildren, Rebecca Martin, twins, Tiffany McKenzie and Heather Fritz, Kristopher (Aliyah) Chesser; nine great grandchildren, Damion (Ashley) Fritz, Devon Martin, Aubrey McKenzie, Kaylee McKenzie, Emma McKenzie, Samuel McKenzie, Kierstyn Fritz, Cierra Fritz, Kennedy Chesser, Aria Chesser, Beckett Chesser; four great great grandchildren, twins, Addyson Fritz and Allyson Fritz, Kamari McKenzie, Keiland McKenzie, Journi Fritz.

She was preceded in death by her parents and her sister, Janice Ann Youngs.

Lula will be laid to rest in a private family graveside service in Poe Cemetery in Newberg Township, Michigan.

The family prefers contributions in memory of Lula be made to Marcellus Ambulance Service, 177 East Main Street, Marcellus, Michigan 49067.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Please share a memory or a message online: wagnercares.com.

Donald Snyder

June 28, 1937 - November 26, 2024

Donald E. Snyder, 87 of Niles, died after an extended illness, Tuesday, November 26, 2024. His life began June 28, 1937 in Niles, first born of to Harold and Alice Snyder.

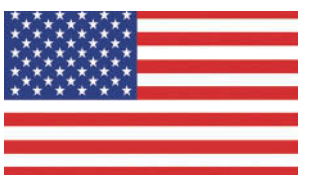
Don graduated Niles High School in 1955. Following high-school he went to Michiana College of Commerce, where he studied accounting. He was a supervisor for National Standard for 31 years following that he was the manager at Ikon at Notre Dame. Don enjoyed golfing with his dad and brothers. He spent time watching old time TV, the Lions play, college sports and doing cross words. He enjoyed family activities like spending weekends at Smith Lake, fishing and playing cards with his family.

Don will be greatly missed by family and friends. He is survived by, his loving wife of 62 years, Barbara Snyder; two sons, David (Teresa) Snyder, Kevin Snyder; seven grandchildren; 4 great grandchildren; three sibling, Kenneth (Cindy) Snyder, Beverly (Patrick) Smith, Terry Snyder and several nieces and nephews.

Family will observe a private remembrance.

Memorial Contributions can be given in Don's name to the Charity of your Choice.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services, Niles. Please share a memory or a message online: halbritterwickens.com.



Laurel Jacob Hamilton

January 10, 1946 - December 4, 2024

Laurel Jacob Hamilton, 78, passed away on Wednesday, December 4, 2024, in Mishawaka, Indiana.

Laurel was born on January 10, 1946 in Goshen, Indiana to the late Louise (Rink) Hay.

Laurel was preceded in death by his mother, Louise Hay and step-father, Roy Hay.

Left to cherish the memory of Laurel is his loving wife of many years, Kathy (Krassow) Hamilton.

An avid hunter and fisherman, he spent countless hours in the serenity of nature. Laurel's passion for mechanics shone brightly as he meticulously worked on cars, even building his own from scratch. He found joy in the exhilarating sounds of NASCAR and was an ardent fan of Michigan Football.

Laurel's love for his German Shepherds was unmatched, and he cherished the loyal companionship they provided. Friends meant the world to him, and he valued the time spent in good company, often immersed in conversation or enjoying a quiet day outdoors. Laurel's legacy is one of a life well-lived, rooted in the things he loved most. His presence will be deeply missed, but his spirit will continue to inspire all who knew him to appreciate the simple joys in life.

Visitation for Laurel will be on Monday, December 9, 2024, from 4:00pm to 6:00pm at Brown Funeral Home, 521 East Main St. Niles, MI 49120.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home.

Photos, condolences, and memories may be left for Laurel's family at www.BrownFuneralHomeNiles.com

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GROUP TRIPS 2024

December 4: The Texas Tenors - Deep in the Heart of Christmas - Blue Gate Performing Arts Center in Shipshewana, IN. Enjoy a delicious lunch and holiday show by the most successful music group in the history of America's Got Talent.

See our website or call for more information

CROSSWORD ANSWER
From Page 5

M	A	P		A	H	A	B		A	B	L	E
E	G	O		M	A	N	E		C	R	O	W
S	U	R	R	O	U	N	D		T	O	R	E
S	E	T	O	U	T		S	H	O	W	E	R
			O	N	E			U	R	N		
W	Y	A	T	T		W	I	N		B	O	B
H	E	S			B	E	R	T		E	M	U
I	T	S		T	E	A	K			A	I	D
T	I	E		I	N	K		S	O	R	T	S
		M	A	D			S	A	M			
C	O	B	W	E	B		L	I	A	B	L	E
A	L	L	A		R	A	I	L	R	O	A	D
L	E	E	R		A	M	M	O		L	I	D
L	O	D	E		T	I	E	R		T	R	Y

SUDOKU ANSWER
From Page 5

1	3	2	9	6	8	5	4	7
4	5	9	7	1	3	8	6	2
6	8	7	2	4	5	9	3	1
3	4	8	5	7	9	1	2	6
7	9	5	1	2	6	3	8	4
2	6	1	8	3	4	7	9	5
5	7	4	3	9	2	6	1	8
8	2	3	6	5	1	4	7	9
9	1	6	4	8	7	2	5	3

Niles woman injured in two-vehicle Milton Township crash

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

MILTON TOWNSHIP — A Niles woman was hospitalized following a two-vehicle crash Thursday afternoon in Milton Township, according to the Cass County Sheriff's Office.

Sheriff Richard Behnke reports that at approximately 4:15 p.m. Thursday, his deputies were dispatched to a two-vehicle crash that occurred at the intersection of Runkle Street and Anderson Road in Milton Township.

Investigation shows that a vehicle driven by 49-year-old Gary Vargo, of Dowagiac, was traveling westbound on Runkle Street. Vargo did not see the stop sign due to the stop sign being knocked down. As Vargo entered the intersection of Runkle and Anderson, 44-year-old Lauren Sampson, a Niles resident, was traveling north on Anderson Road and entered the intersection at the same time and was struck by Vargo. Vargo and his three other passengers were checked at the scene by EMS and released. Sampson was transported to Lakeland Niles for injuries sustained in this crash.

Seatbelts were worn at the time of the crash. Alcohol or drugs do not appear to be a factor in this crash.

Assisting at the scene was Edwardsburg fire department and SMACS ambulance.

PET OF THE WEEK

Herkie is a 5-year-old Dachshund mix on a mission to shed weight and lead a healthy lifestyle. He's looking for a workout partner to join him. Playful and energetic, he could be a walking buddy and diet companion. Whether a brisk walk or hitting the trails, this boy will be at your side. Not only committed to fitness goals, he's sweet and friendly. Herkie is neutered, current on shots and housetrained. Contact on Paws of Hope at information@pawsofhope.org.

PARK

Continued from page A1

hours were volunteered by more than 450 different people before and during its 22 nights of operation to prepare and operate the seasonal attraction.

The year also marked a visit from Park interior visitor number 2,700,000. Amber Smith of Kalamazoo, Michigan was the special milestone visitor. She received a gift pack when she visited the Scream Park on Sunday, Oct. 27 with her friend Dustin Schnooberger.

The Scream Park is recognized nationally in the haunted house industry. It was listed at #11 on the Haunted House Chicago Official 2024 Top 13 list. The Scream Park was also listed as the No. 1 "Most Hair-Raising" Attraction by America Haunts.

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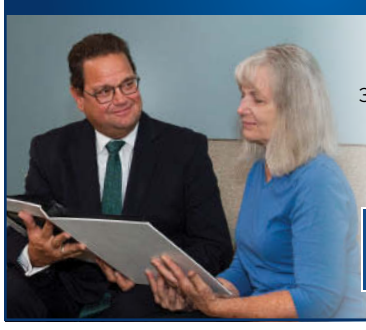
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SHINE

Continued from page A1

door.

The Miss/Mr. Niles event in its 98th year, continues the mission of mentoring young women and men in presentation, communication and interview skills that serve to build confidence and life skills. When the dust settles, Little Miss and Mr., Junior Teen Miss and Mr., Teen Miss and Mr. and Miss and Mr. Niles titles will be awarded by a panel of judges.

The Miss/Mr. Niles Pageant is affiliated with the Blossomtime Festival. Established in 1906, Blossomtime is Michigan's oldest and largest multi-community festival.

Katelyn Boyer and Madelynne Rotondo are the new pageant chairwomen, taking over for previous chairwoman Donna Bradfield. Boyer, who was crowned Miss Edwardsburg 2017 and has worked in pageants throughout southwest Michigan, has embraced her new role and aims to make this year's pageant the best one yet.

"It was a big leap," Boyer said. "My mom was chairman for Edwardsburg for over 25 years so I know exactly how much work it is. I know how much of a challenge it is and how rewarding it is. I really prayed about it and it's something I had to spend some intentional time to think about and ultimately, I love the program so much that I don't want to miss out on a great opportunity."

The pageant experience is something that Boyer remembers fondly as a former contestant and something she looks forward to providing contestants this year.

"I'm really excited to celebrate our kids and all of the work they put in the last couple months," "We started rehearsals and signups in October so they've been working really hard toward growing and putting on the show for everybody. We really want to see as many people there to support them."

Miss Niles Contestants (Ages 17-19): Baylee Davis, Gabrielle Gittens, Emma Williams, Kloe Kiggins, Melanie Kiell, Skyla Cole, Kylie Conn

Mr. Niles Contestant (Ages 17-19): Rowan Iwaniuk

Miss Teen Contestants (Ages 13-15): Alexis McCombs, Katie Nichols, Shelby Snook, Kenley Weston, Natalie Chester, Payton Jackson

Miss Jr. Teen Niles Contestants (Ages 10-12): Allie Glidden, Adrina Krieger, Mya Moore, Elaina Jackson, Emma Moore, Izabelle Wilson

Little Mr. Niles Contestants (Ages 6-9): Lyle Unger, Greyson Unger, Hunter Jackson

Little Miss Niles Contestants (Ages 6-9): Madison Rodriguez, Harper Simmons, Arianna Pavlik, Sophia Unger, Savannah Strout, Maddie Haff

Celebrate a life

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CONTEST

Continued from page A1

prize packages donated by several local businesses, which will be listed on Mayor Shelton's Facebook page.

Those interested may register at this link: https://forms.gle/kTip9XCo6w6yH3jXA.

Entries will be accepted Wednesday, Nov. 27 through Friday, Dec. 13. Voting will take place Monday, Dec. 16 through Saturday, Dec. 22. Winners will be announced Monday, Dec. 23 on Mayor Shelton's Facebook Page. Prizes will be awarded to the top 5-10 vote earners (based on prize packages received).

Visit Mayor Shelton's Facebook page at facebook.com/sheltonformayor for more information.

SUSPECT

Continued from page A1

Tuesday, four who were store employees robbed in the incidents and then Turner's ex-girlfriend who was the original owner of the gun found at Turner's residence, Dodd and Det. Sgt. Joseph Kovac. Dodd testified that Turner was the suspect in the robberies and Kovac testified about the analysis of Turner's cell phone and vehicle data.

Three of the robberies took place at Dollar General stores, while the fourth took place at the Berrien Springs BP gas station. The employees each described the robber as wearing a mask and brandishing a gun. They were each threatened with being shot and told to get money out of cash registers and safes. The robber took the money and ran out of the stores.

The four employees said they did not see the robber's face due to the mask but did say they could see his skin was black. One person said she recognized Turner's eyes and identified him in the courtroom while another person said he would recognize the man's voice if he heard it again.

The suspect in the incidents were described as a black male, tall with a slim build and armed with a black semi-automatic pistol. The person was observed with a gray backpack in the Sept. 6 and Oct. 10 incidents. Police also received a description of a vehicle in the Oct. 10 incident which led them to find the vehicle and place a GPS tracker on it.

Turner was arrested after the Nov. 14 incident on M-139 near Red Bud Trail. He did not deny committing the armed robberies but stated that he wanted a lawyer present. A search of his residence found a gun, disposable gloves and a bank bag stolen from the BP gas station. A search of his vehicle uncovered the gray backpack.

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SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2024

Niles Daily Star
Sports

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BASKETBALL

Niles girls beat Dowagiac 56-25 in season opener

STAFF REPORT

NILES — The Niles girls basketball team kicked off the 2024-25 season in winning fashion Wednesday night.

The Vikings defeated visiting Dowagiac 56-25 in a game originally scheduled for Monday but was rescheduled due to inclement weather. Niles led 27-7 at halftime. Niles' Jenna Thornton led all scorers with 16 points – including 11 in the first half – and Ari Gerritts added 11 points. Marlie Carpenter led Dowagiac with seven points.

NILES 56,
DOWAGIAC 25
At Niles

DOWAGIAC (25): Shamrya Clark 3, Marlie Carpenter 7, Zabrina Shivers 4, Evie Lock 6, Olivia McIntosh 0, Bree Campbell 3, Jamela Bonds 2. Totals 9 4-12 25.

NILES (56): Jessie Thornton 16, Tanaya Brown 8, Maddie Zache 6, Kayla Kiggins 8, Claire DevlescHoward 2, Mia Holmes 5, Ari Gerrits 11. Totals 20 12-22 56.

Dowagiac 2 7 14 25
Niles 13 27 45 56

3-point baskets: Dowagiac 3 (Lock 2, Campbell 1,)Niles 4 (Thornton 1, Zache 1, Kiggins 1, Holmes 1). Total fouls: Dowagiac 21, Niles 17. Records: Dowagiac 0-1, Niles 1-0

Highlights: Thornton scored 11 of her game-high 16 in the first half.

Other local scores:
LAKESHORE 38, EDWARDSBURG 35
At Lakeshore
EDWARDSBURG (35):

LAKESHORE (38): Megan Worster 2, Lily Kleiman 7, Helaina Mihalik 3, Paige Lies 9, Emily Lockman 12, Avery Vroon 5. Totals 16 3-11 38.

See OPENER, Page B3

MAXWELL HARDEN | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

JACOBS SIGNS WITH LMC VOLLEYBALL

Submitted | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

Niles' Kaydence Jacobs has signed with Lake Michigan College volleyball. "Kaydence is a setter who will add tremendous depth to our offense next fall," the team said in a statement. "She is tough, well trained and ready to help our team achieve greatness."

BASKETBALL

MAXWELL HARDEN | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

South Bend Adams downs Niles 58-43 in boys hoops

STAFF REPORT

NILES — The Niles boys basketball team came up short against visiting South Bend Adams Tuesday night.

The Vikings fell to Adams 58-43 in their home opener. Leading 36-35 entering the fourth quarter, Niles (0-2) was outscored 23-7 in the final frame. Branded Olsen led Niles with 15 points while Jarvis Tolbert and Lemonz Jones scored 22 and 14 points respectively to lead Adams.

SOUTH BEND ADAMS 58,
NILES 43
At Niles

SOUTH BEND ADAMS (58): Carter Johnston 6, Lemonz Jones 14, Kalen Allen 7, Drew Dixon 3, Jarvis Tolbert 22, Terron Johnson 4, Johnny Anella 2. Totals 20 16-22 58.

NILES (43): Quinton King Jr. 7, Brayden Favors 6, Andre

See HOOPS, Page B3

FOOTBALL

NILES FALLS TO GOODRICH 35-6 IN D4 FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

DETROIT — A historic season that saw the Niles football team make their first-ever appearance in a state championship has come to an end.

The Vikings (12-2) fell to the Goodrich Martians (13-1) Nov. 29 in the MHSAA Division 4 State Championship game.

Peyton Gordon had four carries for 39 yards and a 35-yard touchdown and Sam Rucker had 9 carries for 44 yards. Talen Bennett completed 1 of 3 passes for seven yards and an interception. Paul Hess led the defense with 12 tackles and Sheldon Cornelius and Sam Rucker had eight tackles.

Goodrich quarterback Tanner Mazich completed 6 of 9 passes for 168 yards and one touchdown and Chase Burnett had 28 carries for 157 yards and two touchdowns while Jakoby Lagat added 76 yards and one touchdown on 12 carries. Max Macklem tallied four catches for 100 yards and one touchdown catch.

"They controlled both lines of scrimmage and they're well coached and played hard," said Niles coach Scot Shaw. "I don't know whether this took us by surprise – don't take nothing away from them – we didn't play real well but that's part of it because they played way better than we did."

The Vikings got the ball to start the game but were unable to sustain the drive and were forced to punt. Goodrich capped a 10-play 68 yard drive with a 21-yard touchdown strike from Tanner Mazich to Max Macklem on 4th and 6 to go up 7-0.

After forcing a three-and-out on defense, Goodrich embarked on an 11 play, 74-yard scoring drive – this one capped by a 1-yard Chase Burnett run, to take a 14-0 lead over the Vikings.

The Vikings ensuing drive got off to a good start with Sam Rucker taking an 18-yard pitch to the Niles 44. But a sack on Bennett, a holding penalty and a Bennett interception led to a Burnett touchdown run on the other end to make it 21-0 with 5:09.

Another Vikings drive ended with a 3-and-out, with Goodrich taking over on their 53-yard line. The Martians marched 52 yards on nine plays to the Niles 1-yard-line attempting to score but time expired.

See FALLS, Page B3

TANYA HAGEN | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

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VIOLLEYBALL

Bachman Sets Sights on SMC

COMMUNITY REPORT

BUCHANAN — Sophia Bachman of Buchanan High School and Dunes Volleyball Club has signed her NJCAA Letter of Intent to play volleyball in the 1st Source Bank Fieldhouse for Head Coach Jenny Nate and the Roadrunners.

Coach Nate said of Bachman, "I had the privilege to coach Sophia at the club level and to watch her grow these past four years into an incredible setter, confident leader, and great attacker. Sophia is a smart, calm presence on the court who runs the offense, knows her hitters, and strives to improve her game daily. She has outstanding defense, excels in the classroom as well as the court, and is a great teammate. Sophia comes from a winning Buchanan team where she helped her team capture three conference championships, two district championships, earned All Conference honors for two years and was her team captain for two years. Along with her high school experience, Sophia has also played at the highest club level at Dunes Volleyball Club. We love recruiting strong, local talent and are thrilled to welcome Sophia to the SMC Volleyball Team."

Buchanan Varsity Head Coach Shelly Bender added, "Sophia has amazing setter hands and has dedicated herself tremendously over the past two years to hone her skills. Her hard work and determination have truly set her apart as one of the best setters in the area. We are incredibly proud of her achievements and the effort she has put in to earn a volleyball scholarship at SMC."

Bachman is the fourth member of the 2025 SMC Volleyball recruiting class, joining Randi Taylor of Lakeshore, Bucks teammate Isabella Tibbles of Buchanan and Meah Evans of Constantine as new players on the Roadrunners squad.

SMC Volleyball finished the 2024 season with a winning record of 22-16, including a win over the previously undefeated and nationally-ranked McHenry County Scots. The Roadrunners were 7-5 in the MCCAA Western Conference, qualifying for the Great Lakes District Tournament for the third consecutive year, advancing in the bracket twice. Individual Roadrunners earned seven conference and regional awards, including All-Freshman Team, All-Conference Honorable Mention, All-Conference Second Team, All-Conference First Team, All-MCCAA Team and All-Region Team.

FOOTBALL

MAXWELL HARDEN | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

Niles' D4 championship game postgame press conference

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

DETROIT — The Niles football team's season came to an end Friday afternoon with a runner-up finish in the Division 4 State Championship Game.

Head coach Scot Shaw and seniors Sam Rucker, Paul Hess and Talen Bennett addressed the media following the game:

[To Shaw] Talk about their quarterback and his ability to stretch plays and complete passes. He had some big passes in the first half.

Shaw: He's good. They're good, they have to be to be here but he did what he does and does it well. We couldn't stay in front of receivers and we couldn't have an edge on that kid.

They controlled both lines of scrimmage and they're well coached and played hard. I don't know whether this took us by surprise – don't take nothing away from them – we didn't play real well but that's part of it because they played way better than we did.

[To Shaw] First trip here to the finals in school history. Talk about the experience and what you're going to take away from this?

Shaw: Obviously it is great. You could tell that they had been here before, they just had that little edge about them and I don't know if we came in and looked at the lights and things like that but I think what we'll do is we've developed a program now. Four years ago, we were not a program when I took over. We struggled to field one team and we had three teams out there this year and I think that our kids believe.

To be really honest, next year was the year we were pointing to where we thought we could get here. Take nothing away from our guys who played on the offense or the defensive line, but we were down three starters and have been for some time. When we get everybody back and healthy we're gonna uh see if we can make a run for it too but these guys are really what the face of Niles football is right now. These guys put us on the map and they carried people on their back for quite a while. They're really really good football players.

[To Shaw] Did anything about their defense surprise you?

Shaw: Yeah, that they were so quick. They didn't look that quick on film. The alignment didn't really surprise us because they had shown that. I think they were stronger and faster than we probably gave them credit for

[To Shaw] Scot you had one sequence in the game where you finally start moving the ball a little bit in the second quarter, and then had a couple penalties and an interception. How much did it take the wind out of the sales when it's only 14-0 at that point?

It really does. Any kind of turnover, any kind of mistake that you make at this level is magnified and we made them and they didn't. We kind of shot ourselves in the foot there out with those.

[To Hess and Rucker] just reflecting on this moment, what does it mean to you guys that you're able to get to Ford Field in the final game of your high school career?

Hess: We're blessed to be able to go this far and what we did for the program. Obviously we didn't want this turnout but this is the way it is.

Rucker: We really learned what it takes to be a winning program just from where we started and where we ended. I can't be more proud of our guys.

[To Bennett] What does it mean for you to be able to experience this season and be the leader at quarterback for the team this year?

Bennett: It definitely was a very crazy experience for me since I had never done this before. I couldn't let it overcome me because I just had to stay confident and calm because once I start getting out of place then everyone else is.

[To Hess] Coach mentioned you guys have really built a program here and now how much does this senior class take pride in the fact that you guys were the ones to do that and can see this down the line potentially becoming a powerhouse in southwest Michigan?

Hess: We take a lot of pride in it. Just being able to start that up was great but it's not just us, it's everybody. It's our coaches. They're able to coach us and they're what built us, so we just put in the work.

[To Rucker] What made the senior group be able to do this to get to this point no one had ever done before in Niles?

We have played together for such a long time. We have a really good chemistry together. It's just the bond that our team has had and it's just like, when the guys next to you are confident in your ability, it really helps you out.

FOOTBALL

The other institutions to earn the honor this year include Air Force, Clemson, Liberty, Virginia, Wake Forest and Wisconsin.

Notre Dame Football Earns 2024 AFCA Academic Achievement Award

COMMUNITY REPORT

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — Notre Dame is one of seven institutions to share the American Football Coaches Association's 2024 Academic Achievement Award.

The award honors the schools with the highest graduation rate for members of the 2017 freshman football student-athlete classes.

Of the seven schools to be recognized with the honor this year, Notre Dame leads the pack with 11 such honors all-time. The Memphis Touchdown Club presents the annual award, which is sponsored by BSN Sports.The head coaches of the winning schools will be honored during the 2025 AFCA Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina on Sunday, January 12.

The other institutions to earn the honor this year include Air Force, Clemson, Liberty, Virginia, Wake Forest and Wisconsin.

This year's award marks the 13th time the NCAA's Graduation Success Rate (GSR) one-year formula has been used to select the winner. From 1981 to 2007, the award was presented based on a formula used by the College Football Association and the AFCA.

From 2008-17, the criteria for the AFCA's Academic Achievement Award was based on the highest NCAA GSR, and a Federal Graduation Rate of 75 percent or better. For 2018 and 2019, the AFCA used the NCAA's single-year APR. The AFCA returned to the GSR one-year formula in 2022.

The GSR is based on a six-year graduation window for student-athletes and holds institutions accountable for transfer students, unlike the federal graduation rate. The GSR also accounts for midyear enrollees and non-scholarship students at schools that do not offer athletics aid. Under GSR calculation, institutions are not penalized for outgoing transfer students who leave in good academic standing. These outgoing transfers are passed to the receiving institution's GSR cohort.

The Academic Achievement Award was established by the College Football Association in 1981. The award recognized the CFA-member Football Bowl Subdivision institution with the highest graduation rate among members of its football team. When the CFA disbanded in 1997, the AFCA stepped in to present the award.

Through the award's history, Notre Dame ranks third all-time in honors won with 11 (Duke, 14; Northwestern, 12).

UM extends Athletic Director Warde Manuel's contract

COMMUNITY REPORT

ANN ARBOR — The University of Michigan has announced a five-year contract extension for Warde Manuel, the Donald R. Shepherd Director of Athletics, so that his term will run through June 30, 2030.

"During Warde's tenure as director, Athletics has put a structure in place where our student-athletes compete for Big Ten and national championships, excel in the classroom, and proudly graduate with their University of Michigan degrees," President Santa J. Ono said during the Board of Regents' Dec. 5 meeting.

Manuel -- who played football under Bo Schembechler, threw the javelin in track and field, and ultimately earned three degrees from U-M -- returned to the university in 2016 following a successful tenure as the athletic director at the University of Connecticut.

He is the 12th athletic director in U-M's history and oversees 29 teams, more than 900 student-athletes, an annual budget of $250 million and a staff of 400. The department remains financially independent and self-supporting.

"I want to express my gratitude to President Ono, Board Chair Kathy White, and the members of the Board of Regents who have been very supportive of me and our athletic department," Manuel said."I look forward to continuing the success that we have driven together during this changing landscape in college athletics.

"Every day, I am thankful to work at this great institution and to represent Michigan Athletics. I especially want to thank the student-athletes, coaches and staff who compete for each of our teams and who have helped us achieve unparalleled success athletically and academically. I am excited to continue giving back to a university that has provided me with so much over my career."

Under his leadership, the university has won 52 Big Ten championships across all sports since 2020 and last year U-M won the 2023 Football National Championship.

Academics remain a focus for Manuel. A new record was set this summer when 243 student-athletes were named to the 2024 Academic All-Big Ten team, an achievement that requires athletes to be in at least their second academic year and maintain a cumulative grade-point average of 3.0 or higher.

Manuel is a member of the College Football Playoff Selection Committee and currently represents U-M and the Big Ten as the chairman of the group. He will be honored Dec. 10 with the National Football Foundation's 2024 John L. Toner Award, which recognizes athletic directors who have demonstrated superior administrative abilities and shown outstanding dedication to college athletics, particularly college football.

FALLS

Continued from page B1

The Vikings were outgained 255-34 in the first half.

Goodrich received the ball to start the second half and picked up where they left off. The Martians capped a 16-play, 73-yard drive with a 1-yard Colton Burnett touchdown run. The play was reviewed after officials questioned whether Burnett crossed the plan, with officials determining the play stood.

Another Niles 3-and-out led to Goodrich receiving the ball on the Niles 45. The Martians moved the ball down the field and Jakoby Lagat scored a 12-yard touchdown to put the Martians up 35-0 with 11:55 remaining.

Niles' defense forced a turnover on downs and drove 76 yards in six plays, capped by a 35-yard Peyton Gordon touchdown run to trim the deficit to 36-6 with one minute remaining.

The Martians outgained Niles 426-96 in total yards.

"We're blessed to be able to go this far and what we did for the program," Hess said. "Obviously we didn't want this turnout but this is the way it is."

"We really learned what it takes to be a winning program just from where we started and where we ended," Rucker added. "I can't be more proud of our guys."

TANYA HAGEN | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

OPENER

Continued from page B1

EDWARDSBURG (35): Shelby Laubach 7, Ella Zache 0, Maddie Pobuda 12, Kortney Zarycki 7, Mya Eberlein 4, Kya Shier 5. Totals 11 10-18 35.

Lakeshore 15 22 24 38
Edwardsburg 6 18 30 35

3-point baskets: Lakeshore 3 (Lies 1, Kleiman 1, Vroon 1), Edwardsburg 3 (Pobuda 2, Laubach 1). Total fouls: Lakeshore 16, Edwardsburg 16. Records: Lakeshore 1-0, Edwardsburg 0-1

Highlights: Lies hit a 3 at the buzzer to win it for Lakeshore.

BRANDYWINE 63, WHITE PIGEON 13
At Brandywine

WHITE PIGEON (13): Shelby McDaniel 6, Amyia Wright 2, Jamie Lynn Delarye 1, Sydney McClure 0, Sadie McDaniel 4. Totals 5 3-14 13.

BRANDYWINE (63): Adeline Gill 14, Karleigh Byrd 5, Adelyn Drotoz 8, Mackenna Price 6, Lily Gill 4, Lexi Troup 0, Ireland Prenkert 0, Paige Krisler 9, Miley Young 11, Niyah Mason 6, Makenii Myer 0, Brook Brumitt 0. Totals 27 2-6 63.

White Pigeon 4 9 11 13
Brandywine 18 35 57 63

3-point baskets: White Pigeon 0, Brandywine 7 (Krisler 3, Drotoz 2, A. Gill 1, Byrd 1). Total fouls (fouled out): White Pigeon 12 (Sadie McDaniel), Brandywine 13. Records: White Pigeon 0-1, Brandywine 1-0

ST. JOSEPH 42, BUCHANAN 38
At Buchanan

ST. JOSEPH (42): Megan Painter 8, Charly Shell 3, Tess Kapelke 9, Lauer Wright 6, Alana Razor 8, Alex Reyes 2, Ava Rommel 6. Totals 17 5-10 42.

BUCHANAN (38): Caitlin Horvath 7, Maddie Young 3, Evyn Pruett 3, Justyce Cashier 0, Katie Ailes 4, Alyssa Carson 21. Totals 14 4-8 38.

St. Joseph 17 30 37 42
Buchanan 11 24 36 38

3-point baskets: St. Joseph 3 (Shell 1, Kapelke 1, Razor 1), Buchanan 6 (Carson 5, Horvath 1). Total fouls: St. Joseph 14, Buchanan 11. Records: St. Joseph 1-0, Buchanan 0-1.

Highlights: Carson had 11 rebounds and four steals, Ailes nine rebounds and Pruett five rebounds and four steals for Buchanan.

HOOPS

Continued from page B1

Wells Jr. 7, Brenden Olsen 15, Acie Kirtdoll 4, Donovyn Williams 4. Totals 16 4-8 43.

S.B. Adams 14 25 35 58
Niles 7 18 36 43

3-point baskets: South Bend Adams 2 (Tolbert 1, Allen 1), Niles 7 (Favors 2, Olsen 2, King Jr. 1, Wells Jr. 1, A. Kirtdoll 1). Total fouls (fouled out): South Bend Adams 18 (Johnson), Niles 20. Records: South Bend Adams 3-0, Niles 0-2

Highlights: Jones and Tolbert each scored eight points as Adams outscored Niles 23-7 in the fourth quarter.

BRANDYWINE 59, LAKESHORE 51
At Brandywine

LAKESHORE (51): Brady Harris 0, Owen Timmons 12, Lane Fry 3, Grant Chase 3, Ethan Thomas 3, Garrett Thomas 8, Brayden Holok 13, Alex Toothman 9. Totals 19 8-16 51.

BRANDYWINE (59): J.J. Henry 5, Nylen Goins 20, Elijhia Burt 2, Will Hubbard 10, Ryder Richard 16, Emerson Gogley 4, Jordon Hester 2. Totals 19 15-25 59.

Lakeshore 14 24 33 51
Brandywine 9 17 35 59

3-point baskets: Lakeshore 5 (G. Thomas 2, Timmons 2, E. Thomas 1), Brandywine 6 (Goins 3, Henry 1, Richard 1, Gogley 1). Total fouls (fouled out): Lakeshore 21 (Chase), Brandywine 12 (Richard). Records: Lakeshore 0-1, Brandywine 1-1

Highlights: Richard scored nine points and Goins eight in the fourth quarter comeback.

BUCHANAN 70, CASSOPOLIS 47
At Buchanan

CASSOPOLIS (47): Jaylen Pratt 8, Lucas Williams 9, Trevon Peterson-Evans 12, Ayden Gillam 6, Tyson West 2, Aarenn Buck-Hooper 5, Jameer Pratt 5, Waylen Yakel 0. Totals 16 10-18 47.

BUCHANAN (70): Tyler Frame 4, Preston Payne 8, Liam McBeth 5, Tristan Nesbitt 3, Karmine Brown 30, Jake Franklin 7, Darius Williams 1, Logan Wiggins 5, Owen Thompson 3, Ari Johnson 4, Will Carson 0. Totals 25 12-23 70.

Cassopolis 12 24 36 47
Buchanan 21 43 58 70

3-point baskets: Cassopolis 5 (Gillam 2, Jameer Pratt 1, Williams 1, Peterson-Evans 1), Buchanan 8 (Brown 7, Nesbitt 1). Total fouls (fouled out): Cassopolis 17 (Buck-Hooper), Buchanan 19. Records: Cassopolis 1-1. Buchanan 1-1

Highlights: Brown scored 15 of his game-high 30 points in the second quarter.

BRIDGMAN 62, DOWAGIAC 44
At Dowagiac

BRIDGMAN (62): Ethan Stine 5, Reid Haskins 7, Ty Adams 7, Chuck Pagel 18, Andrew Mabry 5, Jared Schroeder 20. Totals 23 12-19 62.

DOWAGIAC (44): Jamal Williams 10, Lamone Moore Jr. 9, Isaiah Fitchett 10, Kaleb Smith 3, Brayden Diaz 9, Chase Frazier 2, Riley McCaffery 1. Totals 16 7-11 44.

Bridgman 15 32 50 62
Dowagiac 11 21 34 44

3-point baskets: Bridgman 4 (Schroeder 3, Pagel 1), Dowagiac 4 (Williams 1, Moore Jr. 1, Fitchett 1, Diaz 1). Total fouls (fouled out): Bridgman 12 (Haskins), Dowagiac 15. Records: Bridgman 2-0, Dowagiac 0-2

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Public Notices

Public Notices

PUBLIC NOTICE

SUPERIOR COURT OF WASHINGTON
COUNTY OF YAKIMA
JUVENILE DIVISION
In re the Guardianship of ASHBEN L. HIBBARD
D.O.B. 08/15/12
Minor Child.
Case No.: 24-7-00198-39
NOTICE AND SUMMONS BY PUBLICATION (Guardianship)

TO: James Berry, Alleged Father and Unknown Biological Father
A Petition to Establish Guardianship under Title 13 RCW was filed on July 31, 2024; A Fact Finding hearing will be held on this matter on: January 22, 2025 at 9:00 a.m. at Yakima County Superior Court, Juvenile Division, 1728 Jerome Avenue, Yakima, WA 98902. YOU SHOULD BE PRESENT AT THIS HEARING. THE HEARING WILL DETERMINE IF THE COURT SHOULD ESTABLISH A TITLE 13 RCW GUARDIANSHIP AND APPOINT A GUARDIAN FOR THE ABOVE NAMED CHILD. A PETITION FOR ORDER APPOINTING TITLE 13 RCW GUARIDAN, IF GRANTED, COULD RESULT IN SUBSTANTIAL RESTRICTIONS TO THE RIGHTS OF THE PARENT(S), GUARDIAN(S), OR LEGAL CUSTODIAN(S). To request a copy of the Notice, Summons, and Title 13 RCW Guardianship Petition, call DCYF at (509) 225-6500. To view information about your rights in this proceeding, go to www.atg.wa.gov. DATED this 20 day of November, 2024

Billie Maggard,
Yakima County Clerk

By: Amanda Marshall
Deputy Clerk,

Niles Daily Star:
Nov. 30, Dec. 7 and 14, 2024
24-7-00198-39

PUBLIC NOTICE

ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS
CITY OF BUCHANAN, MICHIGAN
FRONT STREET RETAINING WALL IMPROVEMENTS

CONTRACT DESCRIPTION: The City of Buchanan, Michigan is seeking qualified contractors to remove and replace an existing timber retaining wall located along E. Front Street across the street from The American Legion (403 E Front Street, Buchanan, MI 49107). The retaining wall is to be replaced with a 1'-0" wide reinforced concrete retaining wall tying into existing conditions. The scope of work also includes the demolition and replacement of the existing concrete sidewalk adjacent to the retaining wall, protection of existing curb, gutter and HMA roadway, installation of retaining wall railing, maintenance of traffic, erosion control measures, site clearing and restoration, local permitting measures and coordination allowances with the City of Buchanan for the construction of a banner pole base in conjunction with this project. Substantial Completion is scheduled for June 30, 2025.
CONTRACT DOCUMENTS: The proposal and contract forms as well as the plans and specifications under which the work will be done will be available via a file share website. Requests for access to the file share website may be sent to emoreno@jpr1source.com.
In addition, the documents may be examined at the City Hall, Buchanan, Michigan.
NON MANDATORY PRE-BID: A pre-bid meeting is not planned or scheduled, but bidders are encouraged to visit the site prior to preparing/submitting a bid. Technical questions shall be submitted by Friday January 3, 2025 by 2 pm ET to emoreno@jpr1source.com
BID OPENING: Sealed proposals bearing the project name will be received by the City of Buchanan (Owner), Michigan in the City Hall office of the City Clerk located at 302 N Redbud Trail, Buchanan, MI 49107 until Thursday January 9, 2025 at 2:00pm local time, at which time and place the proposals will be publicly opened and read aloud for the project. Sealed bids shall be based on a unit-price basis.
BIDDING INSTRUCTIONS & SECURITY: The successful bidder will be required to furnish satisfactory performance bond as well as labor and material bond. For execution of the contract, a certified check or bidder's bond in an amount of not less than five percent (5%), made payable to the Owner, of the amount of the proposal will be required with each proposal. The City reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, to waive irregularities in proposals and to accept the proposal, which in the opinion of the Commission, best serves the interest of the City. No bid shall be withdrawn after the opening of bids for a period of thirty (30) days after the scheduled time of receiving bids.

Engineer:
Edgar Moreno, P.E.
574-232-4388
Jones Petrie Rafinski
325 S. Lafayette Blvd
South Bend, IN 46601

Owner:
Timothy J. Lynch, City Manager
City of Buchanan
269-695-3844
302 N Redbud Trail
Buchanan, MI 49107

Niles Daily Star:
Dec. 7, 2024
BIDS

PUBLIC NOTICE

Apex Storage Auction @ 2601 N. 5th St. Niles MI 49120 on December 14, 2024 starting at 10:00 AM.

Dalton Baker - Power washer,power washer, master fan clutch set, motorcycle windshield, shop vac

Quentelia Potts-2 lamps, sofa, dryer, queen bed, dresser, TV stand, pillows

Krystal Hash-2 tennis rackets, miscellaneous items

Vincent Norris-Folding table, auto rims, tires, miscellaneous items

Derek Ash-Dirt bike, helmets, wrenches,motorcycle parts, dressers

Niles Daily Star:
Nov. 30 and Dec. 7, 2024
STORAGE AUCTION

Legal Notices

LEGAL NOTICE

STATE OF MICHIGAN
IN THE BERRIEN COUNTY TRIAL COURT 811 PORT STREET, ST. JOSEPH, MI 49085 (269) 983-7111
SHERRI M. EGMER, PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ESTATE OF CAROL ANN EGMER, DECEASED
PLAINTIFF,
VS
FILE No 2024-0288CH- S
ORDER FOR SUBSTITUTED SERVICE
HEIRS and SUCCESSORS OF GLEN JARMAN, NELLIE JARMAN
And ANYONE CLAIMING INTEREST IN MODULAR STRUCTURE
Defendants.
JOHN R. COLIP (P25250)
Attorney for Plaintiff
12 Longmeadow Village Dr., Suite 100 Niles, MI 49120
(269) 591-6915
ORDER FOR SUBSTITUTED SERVICE
AT A SESSION of said Court at the Courthouse in the City of St. Joseph, Berrien County, Michigan, on November 8, 2024.
STERLING R. SCHROCK, Trial Court Judge
PRESENT: Honorable Sterling R. Schrock, Trial Court Judge
On Motion of Plaintiff, Sherri M. Egmer, Personal Representative of the Estate of Carl Ann Egmer, by and through its attorney, JOHN R. COLIP Esq., of the law firm of BUTZEL LONG, herein; the Court having read the verified Motion for Substituted Service, and being fully advised in the premises:

Public Notices

Legal Notices

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED, That Plaintiff's Motion for Substituted Service be, and it is hereby granted, and that service shall be made upon Defendants, in this matter by: (i) posting a copy of this Order with Attachment "A" in the Courthouse and in two other public places in Niles Township for three continuous weeks; and (ii) publishing this Order with Attachment "A" in the Leader, a newspaper published in Berrien County, Michigan, for three consecutive weeks.
IT IS FURTHER ORDERED That PDQ Services is to post this Oder with Attachment "A" and provide proof of posting in compliance with this Order and file Proof of Posting with this Court.
IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that mailing a copy of this Order to Unknown Parties, their Heirs and Successors, is not necessary since there is no ascertainable way to determine the address nor the specific identity of those Defendants.
IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Attachment "A" is made a part of this Order and will accompany any posting or publication.
STERLING R. SCHROCK
Date: November 18 2024
Honorable
Prepared by:
John R. Colip, Esq. (P25250
12 Longmeadow Village Drive, Suite 100 Niles, MI 49120
269-591-6915
ATTACHMENT "A" TO ORDER FOR SUBSTITUTED SERVICE NOTICE OF COMMENCEMENT OF ACTION
An action to Quiet Title has been filed in the Berrien County Circuit Court, in the State of Michigan. This action, File Number 2024-0288-CH-S, is filed by Plaintiff, Sherri M. Egmer, Personal Representative of the Estate of Carol Ann Egmer, against Defendants: Heirs and Successors of Glen Jarman, Nellie Jarman and Anyone Claiming Interest in Modular Structure claiming any right or title to property located in Niles Township, Berrien County, Michigan and legally described as:
That part of the Northeast Quarter of the Northeast Quarter of Section 24, Township 7 South, Range 17 West, Niles Township, Berrien Conty, Michigan, described as follows, to-wit: thence South 211 feet; thence West 230 feet; thence North 211 feet; thence East 230 feet to the place of beginning. Containing 1.1 acres, more or less.
You must file your answer or take other action permitted by law in the Berrien County Circuit Court at 811 Port Street, St. Joseph, MI 49085, on or before 28 days from the date of last publication. If you fail to do so, a Default Judgment will be entered against you for the relief demanded in the Complaint filed in this case. You may contact the law offices of BUTZEL LONG, 12 Longmeadow Village Drive, Suite 100, Niles, MI 49120, 269-591-6915, for any information on this matter.
Prepared By:
John R. Colip, Esq. (P25250)
12 Longmeadow Village Drive, Suite 100 Niles, MI 49120
269-591-6915

Niles Daily Star:
Dec. 7, 14 and 21, 2024
2024-0288-CH-S

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LEGAL NOTICE

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
BERRIEN COUNTY NOTICE TO CREDITORS
DECEDENT'S ESTATE
CASE NO. 2024-1059-DE-G
HON GORDON G. HOSBEIN
COURT ADDRESS 811 PORT STREET, ST. JOSEPH, MI 49085
269-983-7111

Estate of Jack Thomas Hemminger, JR., deceased
Date of Birth: June 3, 1951
TO ALL CREDITORS:**
NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The decedent,Jack Thomas Hemminger, JR., Died August 22, 2023.
Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to John Thomas Hemminger, personal representative, or to both the probate court of 811 personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

John R. Colip (P25250)
12 Longmeadow Village Drive, Suite 100 Niles, MI 49120
269-591-6915

John Thomas Hemminger 212 Parkway Street Niles, MI 49120
269-635-7703

Niles Daily Star:
Dec. 7, 2024
EST/HEMINGER, J.

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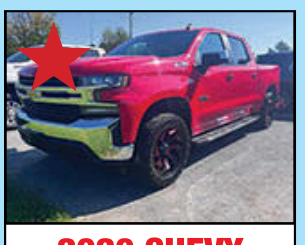

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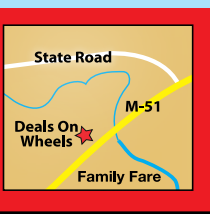

A TEAM TO REMEMBER

Celebrating the Niles Vikings' historic 2024 football season

COMMEMORATIVE SECTION PRODUCED BY LEADER PUBLICATIONS

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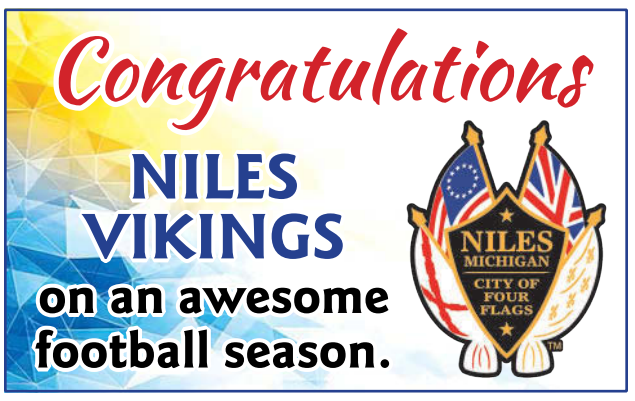

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GAME 1 | FRIDAY, AUG. 30

ST. JOSEPH 30, NILES 7

The Niles football team's season opener did not go as planned. After scoring the game's first touchdown, the Vikings gave up 30 unanswered points to host St. Joseph in a 30-7 loss. Quarterback Talen Bennett found Peyton Gordon on a 4-yard touchdown pass to put the Vikings up 7-0 over the Bears in the first quarter. From that point on, it was all Bears, who scored 30 points in the second and third quarters to take control of the game.

GAME 2 | FRIDAY, SEPT. 6

NILES 46, LAKESHORE 0

NILES — Niles head coach Scot Shaw said his team talked in great detail about needing to respond this week against Lakeshore after its disappointing loss to St. Joseph in the season opener. The Vikings responded to the tune of a 46-0 victory over the Lancers Friday night in their home opener.

The 46-point win over the Lancers is the largest margin of victory for either team in head-to-head history and was the Vikings' first win over the Lancers since 2003.

"Across the board, our performances were much better this week than they were last week," Shaw said.

The Lancers had no answers for the Vikings offense, which outgained the visitors 532-169 in total yards and 478-85 in rushing yards. Niles scored on runs of 30 (Elijah Norris), 45 (Peyton Gordon) and 75 (Sam Rucker) yards to lead 20-0 after one quarter. Sam Rucker (39 yards) and Paul Hess (13 yards) scored touchdowns in the second quarter to lift the Vikings to a 32-0 halftime lead.

Sam Rucker finished with nine carries for 161 yards and two touchdowns and Hess added 19 carries for 119 yards and one touchdown run, all of which came in the first half. Norris tallied nine carries for 96 yards and a touchdown and Peyton Gordon had two caarries for 47 yards and a score.

In the third quarter, a 10-yard Norris touchdown run and a 32-yard touchdown pass play from Bennett to Gordon rounded out the scoring for the game. Lakeshore was threatening in the closing minutes of the game before the Vikings stopped the Lancers on fourth down.

"We talked at halftime about being able to finish and a little bit of maturity," Shaw said. "Because we got some new guys, most of these guys saw this game last year in the second half so I don't think that was a surprise. Our goal is just keep it rolling."

Lakeshore quarterback Landon Hall completed 9 of 21 passes for 84 yards and two interceptions by Brenden Olsen.

"I thought defensively, we did an outstanding job on what in the past has been one of our weaknesses and that's pass coverage," Shaw said. "They didn't even come close and I'm just as happy about that as I am scoring 46 points."

Bennett led the team in tackles with six while completing 2 of 3 passes for 54 yards and one touchdown and one interception.

GAME 3 | FRIDAY, SEPT. 13

NILES 56, THREE RIVERS 6

NILES — The Niles football team made quick work of visiting Three Rivers in Week 3.

The Vikings cruised to a 56-6 win over the Wildcats to begin Wolverine Conference play. Niles led 49-0 at halftime.

The Vikings (2-1) outgained the Wildcats 384-123, including a 311-56 edge in rushing yards.

Peyton Gordon led the Vikings with 134 yards on six carries and a 59-yard rushing touchdown and Sam Rucker had eight carries for 69 yards and two touchdowns and 92-yard kickoff return touchdown.

Elijah Norris (two for 44) and Paul Hess (seven for 41) scored one touchdown apiece.

Quarterback Talen Bennett completed 3 of 4 passes for 73 yards and one touchdown pass, a 34-yard pass to Brenden Olsen, who also intercepted a Three Rivers pass and re-turned it 34 yards for a touchdown.

On defense, Sheldon Cornelius, Alex Anderson and Brandon Hamilton tallied four tackles apiece and Carson Gessinger had one sack.

GAME 4 | FRIDAY, SEPT. 20

NILES 56, OTSEGO 0

The Niles football team extended its win streak to three games Week 4 against visiting Otsego.

The Vikings jumped out to a 56-point lead and went on to win 56-0.

Sam Rucker scored five touchdowns on seven carries totaling 143 yards and Paul Hess had eight carries for 121 yards and one touchdown while Elijah Norris added seven for 55 and a touchdown. Quarterback Talen Bennett completed 3 of 5 passes for 64 yards and a touchdown pass to Brenden Olsen, who caught two passes for 60 yards. The Vikings outgained the Bulldogs 466-47 in total yards.

On defense, Bryce Young led the team in tackles with five and Brandon Hamilton, Ward Cheney and Sam Rucker each had a sack.

GAME 5 | FRIDAY, SEPT. 27

NILES 61, STURGIS 0

Vikings spread the love around in this year's homecoming game against visiting Sturgis.

Six Vikings found the end zone in a 62-0 victory. Niles led 55-0 at halftime and rushed for 482 yards in the game on just 32 carries.

Peyton Gordon tallied six carries for 122 yards and three touchdowns and Elijah Norris had five carries for 55 yards and two touchdowns. Vaughn Asmus (five for 58 yards), Kadarree Guy (3 for 35), Dillon Pearman (3 for 29) and Alex Anderson (1 for 22) found the end zone. Paul Hess had two carries for 56 yards and Sam Rucker had two for 35.

The Vikings defense held Sturgis to 36 total yards of offense, including -28 rushing yards. Ward Cheney led Niles with 5 tackles and Sam Rucker added one sack.

GAME 6 | FRIDAY, OCT. 4

NILES 49, VICKSBURG 7

The Vikings took care of business on the road against Vicksburg for their fifth-straight win.

Niles outgained Vicksburg 365-164 in total yards, including a 341-56 advantage in rushing yards. Peyton Gordon had five carries for 117 yards and three touchdowns and Paul Hess had 14 carries for 119 yards and two touchdowns while Guy Torres added a 4-yard touchdown run. Sam Rucker had 31 rushing yards and a 64-yard punt return touchdown and Brenden Olsen added a 23-yard catch.

Talen Bennett completed 2 of 4 passes for 24 yards and an interception.

On defense, Ward Cheney led the team with seven tackles and Jaden Ivery added six while Hess and Sam Rucker each tallied a sack.

GAME 7 | FRIDAY, OCT. 11 AT EDWARDSBURG

NILES 21, EDWARDSBURG 14

The Vikings edged rival Edwardsburg 21-14 in a Week 7 Wolverine Conference road win at Leo Hoffman Stadium.

Niles won its sixth consecutive game and improved to 6-1 overall while staying unbeaten in conference play at 5-0.

After surrendering three first-half scores, Edwardsburg put the defensive clamps on Niles' flexbone offense in the second half. Trailing 21-14 in the closing moments, the Eddies then held the Vikings in check for four downs and gave its offense one more chance with the football. Edwardsburg began its final series at its own 43 and drove down to Niles' 24 but Lundgren was intercepted on fourth down by Niles' 6-foot-7 junior Brendan Olsen.

Sam Rucker piled up 91 yards rushing for Niles on 11 touches and one TD. Paul Hess added 13 carries for 64 and Peyton Gordon lugged the pigskin five times for 21. Niles quarterback Talen Bennett completed 1-of-4 passes for 18 yards.

Rucker also stood out on the defensive side of the football where he led the Vikings with 12 tackles. Hess added nine tackles, Anderson and Gordon had eight apiece, RJ Fielder six, Cheney five and Olsen contributed four.

Edwardsburg was led defensively by Griffin with seven tackles, while Oscar Morris racked up five and Tyris Yoder had four.

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PAUL HESS – 1,226
PEYTON GORDON – 874

PASSING YARDS
TALEN BENNETT – 535

TOUCHDOWNS
SAM RUCKER – 23
PEYTON GORDON – 16
PAUL HESS – 15

TACKLES
SAM RUCKER – 86.5
WARD CHENEY – 76
PAUL HESS – 65

INTERCEPTIONS
BRENDEN OLSEN – 8

SACKS
SAM RUCKER – 5
WARD CHENEY – 5
PAUL HESS – 3

GAME 8 | FRIDAY, OCT. 18 | AT NILES

NILES 56, PLAINWELL 0

NILES — The Niles football team made quick work of Plainwell in Week 8.

The Vikings cruised to a 56-0 win over the Trojans to improve to 7-1 on the season. Niles outgained the Wildcats 543-99, including a 512-82 edge in total yards.

Paul HHess led the Vikings with 145 yards on four carries and a 59-yard rushing touchdown and Sam Rucker had two carries for 35 yards and two touchdowns.

Elijah Norris (9 for 125) and Alex Anderson (2for 59) scored one touchdown apiece.

Quarterback Talen Bennett completed 1 of 1 pass for 31 yards and added two touchdowns on the ground.

On defense, Sheldon Cornelius, Alex Anderson and Brandon Hamilton tallied four tackles apiece and Carson Gessinger had one sack.

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GAME 9 | FRIDAY, OCT. 25 | AT PAW PAW

NILES 21, PAW PAW 0

Sam Rucker has played in a lot of big football games in his four years at Niles.

Week 9's 21-0 Wolverine Conference Championship win at Falan Field against host Paw Paw was the most memorable – at the time – for the 5-foot-9, 175-pound two-way senior starter at tailback and outside linebacker.

Offensively, Sam Rucker ran the ball six times for 39 yards and caught one pass for 10. But his biggest impact was felt on defense with seven tackles and a fumble recovery that led to one of the Vikings' three scores. If that wasn't enough, he also had five punts averaging 40.4 yards, including a 56 yard boot.

"This one means a lot. It's the same situation as last year. We came out tonight and were physical did exactly what we needed to do against Paw Paw. Everyone did their job and we didn't have any problems or issues," Sam Rucker said.

Sam Rucker recovered a Paw Paw fumble at the Red Wolves' 11-yard line and scored on Talen Bennett's 11-yard scoring pass to Peyton Gordon. Ben Bruckner added the first of his three PATs for a 7-0 Vikings' in the waning seconds of the first half.

Paw Paw drove inside Niles' 40 twice in the third quarter. The Red Wolves turned the ball over on downs on the first drive and Niles' senior Paul Hess intercepted Red Wolves signal caller Gunnar Goodell on the second.

Hess' pick set up Niles' second score at the 10:18 mark of the fourth quarter. Gordon capped off the 68-yard drive with a 27 yard TD dash around the left end. Bruckner's PAT made it 14-0.

Paw Paw's next series ended after the Red Wolves failed on another fourth down conversion attempt.

Hess scored on a one-yard plunge boosting the Vikings' lead to 21-0 with 4:09 remaining. His run capped off a nine-play scoring drive.

Bennett completed 3-of-7 passes for 72 yards, including a 51-yard completion to Max Rucker, Sam's younger brother.

Hess ended the night as Niles' top ground gainer with 25 carries for 53 yards and one TD. Gordon added five trips for 37 and one TD.

Paw Paw's junior tailback Ben Miller paced the Red Wolves on the ground with 16 carries for 94 yards. P.J. DeYoung added 13 attempts for 27 and Bryson Newell rushed six times for 25.

GAME 10 | FRIDAY, NOV. 1 | D4 PRE-DISTRICT AT NILES

NILES 42, PAW PAW 14

The Niles football team faced off against Paw Paw in a high-stakes showdown for the second straight week and just like last week, the Vikings emerged victorious.

The No. 9-ranked Niles football team wore down No. 6 Paw Paw to earn a 42-14 win in the first round of the Michigan High School Athletic Association Division 4 football playoffs Friday night.

Sam Rucker had eight carries for 115 yards and three touchdown runs and Peyton Gordon totaled seven carries for 113 yards and one touchdown while Paul Hess tallied 20 carries for 62 yards and two touchdowns. On defense, Hess led the team in tackles with eight and Brenden Olsen and Alex Anderson each grabbed an interception.

The Vikings outgained Paw Paw 289-181 in total yards. Niles was able to bottle up the Red Wolves' rushing attack. Ben Miller had 20 carries for 60 yards and PJ DeYoung had 16 carries for 48 yards. Quarterback Gunnar Goodell completed 6 of 12 passes for 53 yards, two touchdowns and two interceptions.

The game was a rematch of last week's regular season finale in which the Vikings earned a 21-0 win to clinch their second straight Wolverine Conference championship.

"It is hard (to play a team in consecutive weeks) but you also learn a lot from last week," said Niles Head Coach Scot Shaw. "We knew what we didn't do well last week and I wanted to improve on that this week and part of that was getting outside and making them run and tiring them out. I think that plan was successful – I think they got tired and they couldn't catch us."

N V
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GAME 11 | D4 DISTRICT CHAMPIONSHIP | AT NILES

NILES 21, EDWARDSBURG 0

The Vikings pulled away in the fourth quarter against rival Edwardsburg in the MHSAA Division 4 District Championship game.

Paul Hess scored two fourth quarter touchdowns as the Vikings shut down the Eddies 21-0 to claim their second straight district title.

Niles outgained Edwardsburg 252-219 in a game that was much closer than the score indicates. Hess had 24 carries for 137 yards and two touchdowns on offense and Sam Rucker tallied 10 carries for 69 yards and one touchdown and nine total tackles. Talen Bennett completed 3 of 7 passes for 25 yard. Ward Cheney led the team in tackles with 11 and added a sack.

Edwardsburg's Grant Griffin had nine carries for 43 yards and Grady Ostrander totaled nine carries for 40 yards and quarterback Joe Lundgren completed 1 of 1 passes for 21 yards and added seven carries for 38 yards. The Eddies entered the game averaging 38 points per game.

"Credit to Niles, they made it awfully tough on us," said Edwardsburg Head Coach Dan Purlee. "They're a good football team. They played really aggressive and we didn't execute it as well as we needed to against a team like that tonight."

Leading 7-0 entering the fourth quarter thanks to a seven-yard Sam Rucker touchdown run in the first quarter, the Vikings defense came up with a stop on fourth-and-10 to take over on its own 30-yard line. The offensive line paved the way for senior running back Paul Hess, who capped a 10-play, 70-yard scoring drive with a 10-yard touchdown run to put the Vikings up 14-0 with 6:30 to go in the game.

The Eddies took over at their own 30-yard line looking to make it a one-score game before a fumble on the first play of the drive was recovered by the Vikings, who took advantage of the turnover in the form of a 1-yard Hess touchdown to make it 21-0 with 2:51 remaining.

"They battled hard and they battled relentlessly and I thought that they did exactly what we wanted to do," said Niles Head Coach Scot Shaw. "We played harder longer than they did and I think that we wore them down on the line of scrimmage in the second half after the stops. They got that drive going and we were fortunate enough to stop it. After that we took it down on that drive then we went all the way, burned up some time and scored and put a cushion between us. They're not the type of team that can come back readily from 21 down in six minutes."

GAME 12 | D4 REGIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP GAME | AT NILES

NILES 37, PORTLAND 34

With its season on the line, the Niles football team delivered in big-time moments in a game those in attendance will not soon forget.

Talen Bennett's scrambling, 14-yard touchdown pass to Sam Rucker with 1:10 remaining and Brenden Olsen's interception in the closing seconds lifted Niles to a 37-34 victory over Portland in a Division 4 regional final. The win avenged last season's loss to the Red Raiders in the regional final and secured the team's first football regional title in school history.

"I give our kids credit, man," said Niles Head Coach Scot Shaw. "We didn't quit and neither did they. This was a heckuva football game, man. I don't think they get much better than this."

Bennett completed 5 of 12 passes for 74 yards, one touchdown and one interception and Peyton Gordon had six carries for 71 yards and a touchdown while Paul Hess had 14 carries for 70 yards, 10 tackles on defense and a fumble recovery.

Niles (11-1) outgained Portland 369-307, including a 295-173 edge in rushing yards. Portland's Ethan Cassel was 10 of 17 passing for 134 yards and three touchdown passes and added a rushing touchdown. Chris Battley had three catches for 64 yards and two touchdowns, Evan Gross had four catches for 53 yards and Nolan Zbytowski had two catches for 12 yards and a touchdown.

Sam Rucker had 16 carries for 143 yards and three touchdown runs, two catches for 34 yards and a touchdown catch and 11 tackles on defense.

"He's pretty good, isn't he," Shaw said. "He's a good football player. He's a senior, he's played in a lot of football games for us and I told him before the game that it's up to him to lead us somewhere where we've never been and he took it to heart."

Trailing 34-29 and facing a 4th-and-12 on the Portland 30-yard line with 2:50 remaining, Sam Rucker hauled in a 20-yard pass from Bennett to keep the Vikings' season alive.

"I knew that they thought we were gonna pass the ball, so I did my best to try to make myself as open as possible. I was ready for the contact when it came so when I caught it, I was able to shake it off and get the first down."

A few plays later, Rucker scored the game-winning touchdown using the same play.

"I knew it was going to have contact right when I got it," Rucker said. "As soon as I got through that contact, it felt great."

Olsen had two catches for 32 yards, four tackles and the game-clinching interception. For Olsen, his interception in the closing seconds – his eighth interception of the season – served as a form of redemption after getting beat on a Portland touchdown pass from Ethan Cassel to Chris Battley to tie the game at 21-21 at halftime.

"I knew they were going to throw a fade there, they weren't going to run anything up the middle with 20 seconds left and no timeouts," Olsen said. "I tried to put myself in the best position possible to make it happen."

GAME 13 | D4 STATE SEMIFINAL | AT THREE RIVERS

NILES 62, GRAND RAPIDS SOUTH CHRISTIAN

As the song 'Celebration' by Kool and The Gang blared over the sound system at Armstrong Field in Three Rivers, the Niles Vikings' football team and community celebrated a 62-30 Division 4 semifinal win over Grand Rapids South Christian. The win punched the team's ticket to the D4 Championship Game for the first time ever.

Scot Shaw's Vikings relied on its high-powered Flex-Bone offense and opportunistic defense to down the Sailors, last year's state runners-up.

"I was worried about stopping them (South Christian) but as it turned out they couldn't stop us. I just told our kids to take a deep breath. We've been down before and we just played a great game and battled back," said Shaw, who spent 19 seasons at Three Rivers as head coach and lost to South Christian in the state playoffs his first year there in 1986.

Niles rushed 58 times for 425 yards led by Hess with 28 attempts for 217 yards and one TD. Hess also had the three two-point conversions.

"Going to the state finals is amazing. It's never happened here at Niles so just to see everyone happy is incredible. It's not just for us but for the entire community as a whole," Hess said. "After giving up that early score we did a nice job of adjusting."

Sam Rucker piled up 138 yards in 16 tries. Gordon finished with five touches worth 45 yards and three TDs for Niles.

The Vikings' offensive line consisted of Malachi Burris, Asmus, Jordon Cunningham, Chase Brawley and Evan Williams.

"Our offensive line has a lot of good chemistry and we just need to work hard every day and be effective for us to keep winning. South Christian was strong up front, but we did our job and came out on top. We just kept our heads up and kept driving to win this game," Brawley said.

On the defensive side of the ball, Niles was led in tackles by Olsen and Anderson with five each. Gordon, Elijah Norris and Sam Rucker all had four apiece.

Niles' contain unit consists of linemen RJ Fielder, Bryce Young and Max Rucker; Hess and Cheney at inside linebacker and the secondary of Anderson, Olsen, Gordon and Jaden Ivory.

South Christian was led on the ground by VanDeGreind with 10 carries for 61 yards and Vis, who has signed to play basketball at Western Michigan University, tacked on 11 attempts worth 25 yards. The Sailors gained a total of 85 yards on the ground in 24 attempts.

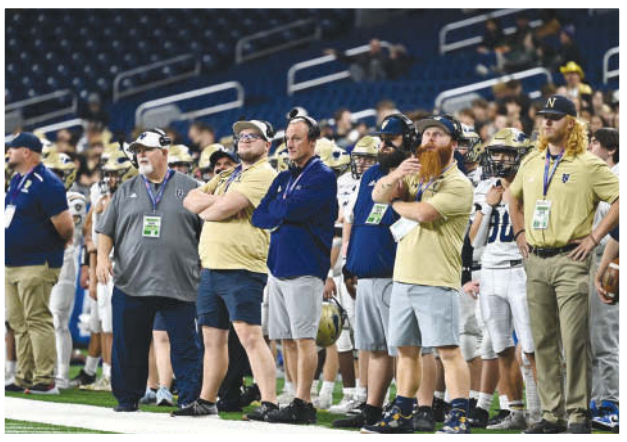
Vis completed 15-of-32 passes for 217 yards in the air. Burgess caught nine passes for 121 yards and three TDs.

"With how well he (Vis) throws the ball nothing is ever safe until you get the ball back," Shaw said.

It was Niles 12th consecutive win after dropping its season opener to St. Joseph.

"Who would've thought we'd be where we are at right now after losing that first one. Other people didn't give us much of a chance then. We knew we were good, but we just had to go out and prove ourselves," Shaw said.

GAME 14 | D4 STATE CHAMPIONSHIP GAME | AT FORD FIELD, DETROIT



GOODRICH 35, NILES 6

DETROIT — A historic season that saw the Niles football team make their first-ever appearance in a state championship has come to an end.

The Vikings (12-2) fell to the Goodrich Martians (13-1) Friday in the MHSAA Division 4 State Championship game.

Peyton Gordon had four carries for 39 yards and a 35-yard touchdown and Sam Rucker had 9 carries for 44 yards. Talen Bennett completed 1 of 3 passes for seven yards and an interception. Paul Hess led the defense with 12 tackles and Sheldon Cornelius and Sam Rucker had eight tackles.

Goodrich quarterback Tanner Mazich completed 6 of 9 passes for 168 yards and one touchdown and Chase Burnett had 28 carries for 157 yards and two touchdowns while Jakoby Lagat added 76 yards and one touchdown on 12 carries. Max Macklem tallied four catches for 100 yards and one touchdown catch.

"They controlled both lines of scrimmage and they're well coached and played hard," said Niles coach Scot Shaw. "I don't know whether this took us by surprise – don't take nothing away from them – we didn't play real well but that's part of it because they played way better than we did."

The Vikings got the ball to start the game but were unable to sustain the drive and were forced to punt. Goodrich capped a 10-play 68 yard drive with a 21-yard touchdown strike from Tanner Mazich to Max Macklem on 4th and 6 to go up 7-0.

After forcing a three-and-out on defense, Goodrich embarked on an 11 play, 74-yard scoring drive – this one capped by a 1-yard Chase Burnett run, to take a 14-0 lead over the Vikings.

The Vikings ensuing drive got off to a good start with Sam Rucker taking an 18-yard pitch to the Niles 44. But a sack on Bennett, a holding penalty and a Bennett interception led to a Burnett touchdown run on the other end to make it 21-0 with 5:09.

Another Vikings drive ended with a 3-and-out, with Goodrich taking over on their 53-yard line. The Martians marched 52 yards on nine plays to the Niles 1-yard-line attempting to score but time expired.

The Vikings were outgained 255-34 in the first half.

Goodrich received the ball to start the second half and picked up where they left off. The Martians capped a 16-play, 73-yard drive with a 1-yard Colton Burnett touchdown run. The play was reviewed after officials questioned whether Burnett crossed the plan, with officials determining the play stood.

Another Niles 3-and-out led to Goodrich receiving the ball on the Niles 45. The Martians moved the ball down the field and Jakoby Lagat scored a 12-yard touchdown to put the Martians up 35-0 with 11:55 remaining.

Niles' defense forced a turnover on downs and drove 76 yards in six plays, capped by a 35-yard Peyton Gordon touchdown run to trim the deficit to 36-6 with one minute remaining.

The Martians outgained Niles 426-96 in total yards.

"We're blessed to be able to go this far and what we did for the program," Hess said. "Obviously we didn't want this turnout but this is the way it is."

"We really learned what it takes to be a winning program just from where we started and where we ended," Rucker added. "I can't be more proud of our guys."

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1	SHELDON CORNELIUS	RB/DE	5-10	180	JR.
2	BRAYLON SCHULTZ	WR/DB	5-10	190	SR.
3	BRENDEN OLSEN	WR/DB	6-7	175	JR.
4	JADEN IVERY	WR/DB	5-11	165	SR.
5	TALEN BENNETT	QB/DB	5-10	175	SR.
6	ALEX ANDERSON	RB/DB	5-8	165	JR.
7	GUY TORRES	RB/DB	5-8	170	JR.
8	PEYTON GORDON	RB/DB	5-6	165	SR.
9	WARD CHENEY	RB/LB	5-9	180	JR.
10	PAUL HESS	RB/LB	5-9	210	SR.
11	CARSON WRIGHT	WR/DB	6-0	170	SR.
12	AIDEN FAWCETT	WR/DB	5-9	150	SR.
13	ACIE KIRTDOLL	WR/DB	5-9	155	JR.
14	SAM RUCKER	RB/LB	5-9	175	SR.
15	ZACH ZIETLOW	QB/LB	5-9	160	FR.
16	KADARREE GUY	RB/DB	5-8	160	FR.
17	DILLON PEARMAN	RB/LB	5-7	170	JR.
19	BEN BRUCKNER	K	5-8	160	SO.
20	BROGAN LAKE	QB/DB	5-8	140	FR.
21	CARSON GESSINGER	TE/LB	5-9	170	SO.
22	CHAYCE QUINN	WR/LB	5-10	165	SO.
23	ARMANDO GARCIA	WR/DB	5-8	160	SO.
24	ELIJAH NORRIS	RB/LB	5-9	170	JR.
25	BRYCE ZACHE	WR/DB	5-10	170	SO.
26	VAUGHN ASMUS	RB/LB	5-9	170	FR.
27	DAVID RODRIGUEZ	RB/LB	5-9	185	FR.
29	GUNNER SHERER	RB/DB	5-9	160	SO.
30	BRANDON WALSH	RB/LB	5-10	160	FR.
31	LANDON PEARMAN	WR/DB	5-8	150	JR.
32	ELIJAH RITCHIE	TE/LB	5-7	165	FR.
34	MAX RUCKER	TE/DL	6-1	200	SO.
37	AVARY ZIMMERMAN	RB/DB	5-7	145	FR.
40	BRADLEY WOOLVERTON	RB/LB	5-6	170	FR.
42	HENRY HEIN	RB/LB	5-10	165	FR.
51	RJ FIEDLER	OL/DL	5-10	200	JR.
55	JAYMES PHILLIPS	OL/DL	6-2	220	SR.
56	BRYCE YOUNG	OL/DL	5-9	220	JR.
57	JOHN RADER	OL/DL	6-0	170	JR.
58	MALACHI BURRIS	OL/DL	5-9	225	JR.
59	TYRONE HARRINGTON	OL/DL	5-5	165	SO.
61	WILLIE WILLIAMS	OL/DL	5-9	210	JR.
62	ANTHONY WILLIAMS	OL/LB	5-9	185	FR.
63	DANE ASMUS	OL/LB	6-0	220	SR.
68	MICHAEL TAMPLIN	OL/DL	6-0	225	FR.
69	TRENTON SCOTT	OL/DL	6-2	280	JR.
70	SHANE BARBER JR.	OL/DL	6-0	220	JR.
71	CHASE BRAWLEY	OL/DL	6-1	280	JR.
73	JACOB KEHOE	OL/DL	5-9	200	SO.
74	EVAN WILLIAMS	OL/DL	5-9	200	SO.
76	MIKEY HOWELL	OL/DL	5-9	210	FR.
77	RILEY COWAN	OL/DL	5-11	255	SR.
78	BRANDON HAMILTON	OL/LB	5-11	240	JR.
79	JORDAN CUNNINGHAM	OL/DL	6-0	230	SR.
88	EMMETT MOYER	TE/DL	6-2	210	JR.
99	MARK ADAMS	OL/DL	5-8	150	JR.

HEAD COACH: SCOT SHAW
ASSISTANT COACHES: KYLE MIKEL, DAN BRAWLEY, DAVE LANDON, AUSTIN WEBER, LONNIE JONES, ZACH FILLWOCK, JOEL BRAWLEY, SCOTT SWANSON, JACOB HAMM, CHASE ANDRES, THANE TYPER
CAPTAINS: SAM RUCKER, PAUL HESS, BRANDON HAMILTON, TALEN BENNETT
TRAINER: KATIE KNISELY
MANAGERS: BROOKLYN HOSKINS, JAZMIN SOSA, KALEB FERGUSON, TYLER PRATT

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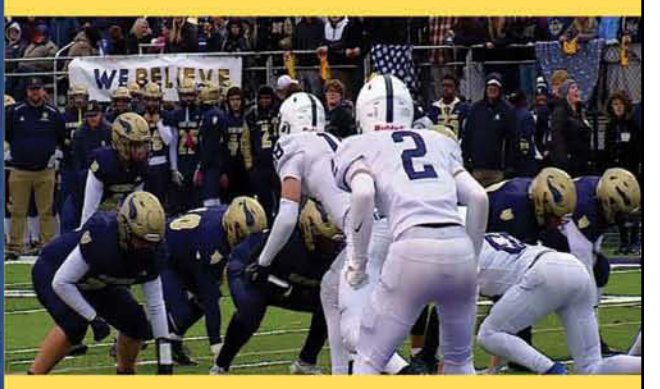

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